

**TEACHING POSITIONS: A STUDY OF IDENTITY IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION**

ALISON STEWART

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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I hereby declare that except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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ABSTRACT

In Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching a growing emphasis on the social aspects of language teaching and learning has shifted research inquiry away from methodology to focus instead on the specific contexts in which these activities take place. Within these contexts, a prominent role is occupied by the teacher.

Teacher identity is particularly significant in language teaching, where the teacher's relationship and attitude to the target language could have important pedagogical implications. Nevertheless, theoretical frameworks for understanding teacher identity have all too often been marred by cultural stereotyping or a reluctance to admit that identity matters at all.

This thesis proposes a methodology for researching teacher identity which derives from a poststructuralist conceptualisation of identity as a form of 'strategic positioning'. According to this concept, identity is never fixed but people do signal temporary affiliation with particular social categories or groups from which insights can be inferred concerning the social world that they experience, and their values and beliefs about that world.

An analysis of strategic positioning in the transcripts of long interviews with eight English teachers in Japanese higher education permits a richer understanding of the multiple ways in which identity and practice are intertwined. The findings support a critique of current thinking about professionalism and expertise, and offer an original challenge to a number of critical linguistic arguments associated with English as an International Language, such as linguistic imperialism, intercultural spaces and postmethod pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, researchers in the fields of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching have shifted attention away from decontextualised methods of teaching and learning to focus more on the socially and historically situated contexts and actors in the teaching encounter. From this perspective, identity has come to be seen as a key element, rather than an unwelcome variable, in understanding language teaching and learning. Therefore, understanding language teacher identity is as important as - indeed is an integral part of - understanding teaching practice. To illustrate why the area of teacher identity merits closer investigation, let me start with the story of Gwendolyn Gallagher, whose case of unfair dismissal from a university in Japan has attracted some attention among the language teaching community over recent years (Tomei and other concerned parties, 2000).

In March 1996, Gallagher was dismissed from her job as a full-time lecturer of English language at Asahikawa University in Hokkaido, despite having worked there for several years without incident or complaint. When the university refused to give adequate or justifiable reasons for their action, Gallagher took her former employers to court, demanding that she be reinstated. In December 1996, the court issued an injunction and the following March the university agreed to re-employ her and compensate her for earnings lost in the intervening year. At the end of this subsequent year of employment, the university refused to renew her contract, claiming that in the court settlement the new contract was limited to one year. Gallagher again took the university to court. This time, the university did present reasons for terminating her contract, namely that 'as the plaintiff [had] been living in Japan for about fourteen years and [was] also married to a Japanese she lacked the ability to introduce

firsthand foreign culture found overseas, as is required of a teacher of level three [tertiary level] classes' (cited in Tomei et al, 2000). The court subsequently ruled in favour of the university.

A series of controversial assumptions about the role of a foreign language teacher are apparent in the university's statement of justification. In outlining these below, my intention is not to defend the teacher or offer a rebuttal to the Japanese judiciary¹; instead I use these assumptions as a way of indicating some of the main questions that have motivated this research and which are addressed in this thesis:

Assumption 1: Foreign teachers are representatives of their culture, and their job is to teach their culture.

The assumption here by the university is that Gallagher's cultural identity as an American supercedes her professional identity as a teacher. To give the assumption due credit, it is true that many foreign language teachers do regard themselves as ambassadors or informed critics of their native country and culture. Even if they do not see it as the main focus of their teaching, most foreign teachers may use their membership of and, hence, intimate knowledge of, another culture as a way of bringing the language they teach to life, and perhaps also holding up a comparative yardstick by which their students can look at aspects of their own culture.

Furthermore, some foreign teachers are specifically appointed to teach courses, for example, on British Studies or American Studies. On the other hand, simply because

¹ Exchanges in the PALE newsletters, some of them highly critical of Gallagher, have addressed both these aims. I have also chosen to ignore the possibility that the court's statement was merely an awkward way of justifying an action that was taken on purely economic grounds.

one has been brought up and lived in a particular culture does not mean that one is thereby qualified to teach it.

However, the idea that foreign teachers are 'representatives' of a culture is to suggest that they themselves are embodiments of that culture. It has to be admitted that there is some truth in that suggestion. Linguists (see Gumperz & Levinson, 1996) generally accept a weak version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, namely that our native language influences the way we think. What teachers say and how they behave in the classroom thus may well represent cultural practices that are unfamiliar to their students.

Moreover, their cultural identity may be 'on show' whether they are aware of it or not. As one commentator has remarked, 'language teachers are so much teachers of culture that culture has often become invisible to them' (Kramsch, 1993, p.48).

So teachers may be willing or they may be oblivious representatives of their culture.

There is also a third aspect: namely that they may be unwilling to be taken as representatives of their culture, but this is how they are regarded anyway. This brings us back to the first point that this attitude prioritizes teachers' cultural identity over their professional identity or expertise, an experience that is demeaning, even racist towards foreign teachers.

Assumption 2: Foreign teachers who are integrated into Japanese society are less effective than those with less time in Japan.

This is essentially an assumption concerning the meaning of culture. The university's justification assumes that teachers are cultural representatives whether they are aware

of it or not, and whether they like it or not. But there is another assumption implied here too, namely that cultures are bounded, such that pure Japanese culture is to be found only in Japan, pure British culture only in Britain, and so on. As the court ruling has it, foreign teachers should 'introduce first-hand foreign culture found overseas.' This could refer to the prevailing customs and habits, social trends, new fashions and *zeitgeist* that exist in the teacher's country, and with which it is possible she could lose touch. It could also refer to the ways of thinking of the natives of that country. Accordingly, if a person moves from one culture to another, her native ways of thinking will become 'tainted' by contact with the new culture. By living in Japan for fourteen years and marrying a Japanese man, Gallagher is regarded as having compromised her cultural integrity. She has become too Japanese.

However, this is more extreme than regarding teachers as cultural representatives. Rather, it is 'cultural tokenism'. Unlike being a 'representative', which implies being a member of a group whose interests you are entitled to represent, a cultural token is a mere object, a form signaling difference. Being a representative implies having a voice and being able to engage with others. A cultural token does not engage with others; its sole purpose is to be exotic.

The notion that teachers become less effective over time appears to fly in the face of commonsense thinking. Indeed, almost all of the literature on language teaching education and development, if not on language teaching practice generally, starts from the premise that most problems occur when teachers lack experience. Moreover, lacking experience of the context of teaching may be as serious as lacking experience in teaching practice. Expertise has been described as 'progressive problem solving'

(Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Tsui, 2003), and this suggests that teachers should become more effective the longer they teach. But might it not be the case that many teachers reach a plateau at some point in their careers, or even a peak after which they start to decline, becoming less effective as teachers? Is there any evidence to suggest that this is particularly pertinent in the case of ex-pat language teachers?

Assumption 3: The role of foreign language teachers is different to that of local teachers.

Hitherto, the discussion has concerned only the identity of ex-pat language teachers. There is an assumption, however, that such teachers have a different role to play from that of the Japanese teachers. If the role of foreign teachers in tertiary education is to teach 'culture', what is the role of Japanese teachers? Do Japanese teachers not teach culture? Since Holliday's (1994) 'appropriate methodology' appeared to pose a challenge to the universal applicability of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), debates have continued over who should change: should foreign teachers adapt to local educational practices, or should institutions and teachers in such contexts change their practices to conform with what has become mainstream language teaching practice? What evidence is there of how practicing teachers view this dilemma?

A final point worth making is that the role of a university teacher in Japan, as elsewhere, is not restricted to the teaching they do in the classroom. In universities, as in other kinds of educational institutions, both private and public, teachers work in a community in which they are called upon to undertake other tasks, such as curriculum development and reform, or exam preparation and marking. Is there any reason why

ex-pat teachers should be excluded from these kinds of activities? Is it possible for foreigners to become full members of the academic community in Japan?

I started out by asserting that the assumptions implicit in a Japanese university's stated reasons for terminating the employment of a long-term ex-pat language teacher are controversial. Certainly, they are not the kinds of assumptions that most applied linguists would make, because they appear racist. Language teaching is these days considered to be a profession (see Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Language teachers are supposed to be judged on what they do, not on who they are or where they come from. There should be no relation between professional identity and cultural identity. And yet, it is not so easy to distinguish a teacher's practice without taking some account of her identity. Joseph (2004) asserts that 'language and identity are ultimately inseparable' (p. 13). If this is the case, then how does that alter the way we think about professional identity and cultural identity in language teachers?

The example I have used of the Gallagher case and the teachers whose lives are described and whose narratives are examined in the study that follows are all taken from the context of English Language Teaching in Japanese higher education. The stories that they tell of their teaching practice are situated in that specific cultural and historical context. Nevertheless, my aim is to suggest a way of looking at identity, based on a guiding principle of position, which could be applied to the situation of any language teacher in any context.

Research Themes

I chose to begin with the example of a teacher who lost her position at a Japanese university to show that cultural identity is an issue that can affect people's lives and their livelihood. In this thesis I shall examine eight teachers who have (or had) teaching positions in various universities situated in and around Tokyo. Indeed, position is conceptually central to the way I have chosen to define identity in this thesis. The notion of identity as position, based on theoretical literature from a range of disciplines, is what has guided my choice of three main research themes, which are explored in the teachers' narratives.

Position can be viewed in various different ways. One way is to examine it in terms of a person's life or career history. As I have mentioned, English Language Teaching is widely considered to be a profession (Howatt & Widdowson), but what does that mean in terms of career direction and career development of individual teachers? How do teachers represent the influences on their career choices and how do they envisage their futures?

Another way to look at position is to examine teachers' social relationships at work. How do teachers view their identity within the institutional context of their work? How are they valued by their students and others? To what extent do they feel themselves to be members of a community, or communities? Do they sense any conflict between the communities of which they are members? To what extent do they feel themselves to be marginal or outsiders?

A third way of looking at the social aspect of language teachers' identity concerns what I shall term their 'language identity', by which I refer to teachers' identity as Japanese, native speaking or bilingual. How does their language identity affect what and how they teach English to university students? Remembering the Gallagher case, do teachers represent themselves as authorities or as representatives of a particular language or culture? Do they feel that such roles are expected of them?

Thesis Outline

In Chapter One, language teacher identity is seen as spanning two areas of research: professional and cultural identity. The concept of professionalisation for language teachers is rife with contradictions. On the one hand implying standard practices and beliefs, the field has undergone a shift towards seeing teachers' professional knowledge and practice as situated in the local contexts of teaching. This contradiction is further explored through a review of current literature on expertise and on various notions of work communities.

Moving onto cultural identity, I continue with a review of research into native and non-native teacher identity. The distinction between the two has been shown to be of more political than any linguistic relevance, and this has proved to be a particularly powerful insight in research on English as an International Language. Ideological discourses that underlie the west-produced materials and methods of English Language Teaching turn the spotlight again on the identities of the teachers and students who use them. But what is the relationship between such discourses or cultures and individuals? Are teachers representatives or embodiments of particular cultures, as Kramsch has suggested?

Chapter Two draws on a number of theories from a range of academic disciplines that address the concept of identity. Bourdieu and Lemke are the starting point for this review, offering theories of society and the individual that are entirely based on an idea of positions within fields or systems. From an opposite approach of phenomenology, Goffman provides some insights into the importance of the roles people adopt in the presentation of themselves in social life. Goffman's ideas are developed in two other phenomenological researchers, Gee in the area of Applied Linguistics, and Mathews in Cultural Anthropology. Gee's work is particularly concerned with the way social groups are represented in Discourses. Representation is explored through research in Social Psychology on stereotypes and in Cultural Studies on Orientalism. It is also examined in the work of researchers who have made the study of social identity in everyday talk their priority. I end with a review of Hall's study of identity in postmodern theory. I borrow from Hall the term of 'strategic identity' as a way of conceptualizing teachers' identities in this thesis.

Chapter Three describes the study, which was conducted with teachers from various Japanese universities. Based on a three-stage interview model suggested by Seidman, the teachers were encouraged to talk about their life histories, their current teaching practices, and their beliefs about teaching or themes that had emerged over the course of the first two interviews. The interview transcripts that were generated are treated as data which was examined for evidence of strategic positioning by the teachers.

Various methods of analyzing such positioning are considered, and an example of analysis is shown using an extract from one of the interviews.

Prior to embarking on the analysis, Chapter Four sets the scene by describing the social and educational context in which the participating teachers live and work. The Japanese higher education system is vast in terms of its size - like Britain and the United States, it caters for about 40% of the school graduate population - and social importance. I trace some of the major developments in the history of Japanese higher education and review research that has described the social structure of academic groups in Japanese universities. Foreign teachers have always occupied a marginal position in this institutional structure, and I examine some of the recent reforms that have started to affect this position. In the second part of this chapter, I present eight teachers who took part in this study – four Japanese, three American and one British. The summaries are intended for the reader to obtain a sense of who the teachers are and where they come from. This chapter ends by comparing these teachers in terms of their respective positions vis-à-vis the universities for which they work and suggests that social and institutional differences between teachers are more significant than is generally recognized.

Chapter Five commences the data analysis by examining the ways teachers talk about their careers. Three teachers, one from each of three categories identified in the previous chapter, are selected as case studies for analysis. Although the teachers represented their career affiliations in significantly different ways according to their social position, other factors, such as age and family situation, were equally important in determining teachers' attitudes towards their career trajectories.

Chapter Six continues by examining positions of expertise, using the interviews with two non-Japanese teachers as case studies. Although the two teachers occupy similar

positions in their respective universities, their experience of work is radically different. By examining the stories they tell about students and other teachers, I explore the different ways they seek to justify what they do. Although the focus is on the teachers' representations of their practice, their strategic positioning in relation to students and colleagues is of crucial importance to their feeling of job satisfaction and self-worth.

Chapter Seven ends the analysis with an investigation of the ways teachers position themselves in relation to English. The teachers are divided into three groups: native, non-native and Japanese returnees, that is, Japanese educated abroad, and two from each group are selected for study. The contrasts between the pairs suggest that good teaching comprises a much wider range of roles and styles than is generally admitted in Applied Linguistics and ELT. The findings here are related to recent statements in the research on Japanese nationalism in ELT, linguistic and cultural imperialism, and on Kramsch's notion of intercultural position.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by summarizing how the study contributes new insights to professionalism in second language teaching, the nature of expertise, the politics of teacher language identity, and Kumaradavidelu's (2001) notion of postmethod pedagogy. The concept of strategic positioning is evaluated as a methodological tool in this study that may enable teachers anywhere and at any stage of their professional development to reflect on their present positioning and the possibilities for better alternatives. The complexity of identity positions entails that more questions are raised than are answered, and this chapter ends with some suggestions for future studies in this area.

In the end, I hope to have shown that language teachers' professional and cultural identities are more closely entwined than has previously been admitted. More importantly, however, by conceptualizing identity as position, I hope to shed light on how and why teachers negotiate their identities in particular ways. In the English language, the term 'identity' covers both identification with a social group or groups and uniqueness of the individual. In writing about the teachers in this study, I have tried to do justice to both.

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY: PROFESSIONALISM AND CULTURE

1.1. Introduction

Language teacher identity is a complex, contentious and necessary area of inquiry in Applied Linguistic research: it is complex because language teachers come from many different backgrounds and teach in many different social contexts, and because there are so many different ways to define identity; it is contentious because despite the numerous different conceptualizations, identity always implies difference, and difference always offers potential grounds for discrimination and injustice; finally, it is necessary because identity is central to the job of being a language teacher: how teachers choose to represent the learners' mother tongue and the target language, how they choose to represent the people who speak these languages, these are implicated in everything they do in their teaching practice.

My reasons for choosing to embark on such a difficult subject are rooted in my own experience of becoming a language teacher. Language teaching was something I fell into more by accident than by design. In my early thirties and with a new baby, I left my job in England as an editor and writer at a small research consultancy, which specialized in political and economic risk analysis around the world. My area had been Eastern Europe in which I had gained some expertise through the 1980s and early 90s when I completed a masters thesis on national identity in the newly independent Ukraine. However, when my husband was suddenly offered a job teaching English Literature at a Japanese university, I was happy to go along, expecting to stay two years before returning to UK and resuming my career

researching and writing about the former Soviet Union. Instead, we stayed. My husband's two-year contract turned into tenure; people he met through work during his first year casually asked, since I had a masters degree from a prestigious British university, whether I would also be interested in teaching.

And so I became an English language teacher, working part-time at three different universities. Although I had taught English before, supplementing my income as a graduate student helping mainly French teenagers prepare for entrance examinations to the famous *grandes ecoles*, I was certainly not equipped to teach classes of Japanese university students, most of whom seemed to be little motivated to improve their English. My first few years' teaching were frustrating and often demoralizing.

However, at that time I had the good fortune to teach classes at one university with a woman I had known at graduate school. Sayumi had returned to Japan after completing a PhD in history, and was teaching English part-time at her alma mater while she rewrote her PhD dissertation as a book in Japanese and cast around for a permanent position in Japanese higher education. Although I was reluctant to admit how clueless I was, I hung on her every word in our many conversations about our classes. Assigned to teach writing, as I was, she was using materials that she had been given on a thesis writing course she had taken during her graduate studies, and that she had considered to be vastly superior to any English teaching she had received in Japan. I borrowed her materials and puzzled over how they squared with the American composition textbook I had bought to teach the course, as well as over how Sayumi had managed to make this material accessible, while my own attempts often

seemed to be way over my students' heads. I wondered whether my difficulties, and Sayumi's apparent ease, were due to the fact that I was English and she was Japanese.

Outside the classroom, Sayumi introduced me to many of the professors in the department, and I felt that I was welcomed because of my association with Sayumi, an insider and a rising star. My experiences of working as a part-time teacher and later as a limited contract full-time visiting lecturer (*gaikokujin kyakuin kyoshi*), and my conversations with other adjunct teachers I came across in staff rooms, taught me that such friendly contact with full-time faculty was not typical. I realized that there was a strict hierarchy of social relations, but my own place on that hierarchy was not clear. As a part-time teacher, my status was marginal; yet as my experiences with Sayumi indicated, other factors, such as my Oxbridge background or the fact of being married to a tenured professor at a prestigious Japanese university – things that had nothing to do with my English teaching – seemed nevertheless to enhance my social and professional standing.

In the introduction to this thesis, I described how Gwen Gallagher lost her job, apparently, because of factors that had nothing to do with her professional competence. In some respects, although my experiences have been happier, there is a parallel with my own situation: I have been considered a good teacher and have been appointed to jobs in Japan despite my relative lack of experience or qualifications to teach English. In both our cases, our identity – who we are and how we are perceived by others - has affected our professional lives.

In this chapter, however, I begin by reviewing recent literature that has addressed issues of identity in language teaching. As is apparent in the examples I have provided, our identity as language teachers is affected by other complex aspects of identity, such as nationality, educational background, or family circumstances. I have chosen to focus on the tensions that exist between professional and cultural identity, not because I consider other aspects, such as gender or class, to be unimportant (see Simon-Maeda, 2004, for example on gender), but because professional and cultural identity is a salient issue for language teachers across the board.

How is professional identity treated in applied linguistics and other fields? What does it mean to be a professional language teacher? What does it mean to be a teacher who is a native or non-native speaker of English, from the center or the periphery, foreign or local, EFL or ESL? The general purpose of this review is not only to give an indication of the scope of this subject, but also to create a research space (Swales & Feak, 1994), that is, to identify a set of problems that can be addressed in an empirical study.

1.2. Professional Identity

Traditionally, the ‘professions’ are taken to be medicine and the law, and the characteristics of these occupations – a shared technical culture, a service ethic, and self-regulation - have been prescribed as the defining criteria for other occupations, such as teaching, which aspire to a professional status (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996). Judged by those criteria, however, teaching falls short of the mark. As Lortie (1975) argued in his classic study of school teachers, teaching can be described at best as ‘partly professionalised’ (1975, p.23). Teachers in schools work largely in

isolation, teaching different groups of students in separate classrooms, which obstructs the formation of a shared technical culture. Lortie likens them to eggs in the separate compartments of an egg crate (p.13). Moreover, although teachers enjoy considerable autonomy in the classroom, they are not self-regulating as a group but rather 'continue to be employed subordinates' (p.22), subject to the directives of school and external administrators.

A further shortcoming that applies specifically to language teaching, and one that distinguishes it from other kinds of formal teaching, is the vast range of institutions or social settings in which language teaching can be practiced. To take the Japanese educational system as an example, at one end of the spectrum, language teachers can be highly paid university professors, at the other, they can be undergraduates, earning the equivalent of ten dollars an hour. In Japan, a vast industry of *juku*, cram schools preparing high school students for the highly competitive university entrance examinations, tends to employ as a preference young undergraduates who have themselves only recently passed those tests and are hence ideally placed to pass on the secret of their success. Language teachers can also be bright, young native speakers using teaching as a way of making easy money to support their usually temporary experience of living in a foreign country. Clayton (1989) rather disparagingly calls such teachers 'unreal', compared with 'real' teachers who take a professional attitude toward their work, obtaining qualifications and training and committing themselves to a long-term career in language teaching. Finally, a great deal of language teaching - perhaps most - is informal: native speakers or more advanced learners helping out their friends.

Certainly, in this respect, teaching is very different from medicine and law.

Practitioners in those professions possess an expertise that enables them to do something for us that we could not possibly, or at least easily, do for ourselves, and that we would not trust a non-professional to do, for example, remove an infected appendix or handle the conveyancing of a house purchase. On the other hand, learning a first language or languages is something that almost everybody does naturally.

Moreover, throughout history, people have learned subsequent languages in adulthood for various reasons, though mostly due to migration, and have done so without any special expert intervention. Language teaching has a long history, but is only in the post-war period that it has assumed its present proportions and importance (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

Needless to say, this is not a view that is to be found in the literature. Thornbury (2002) offers a rare exception, suggesting that ‘backpacker’ teachers with nice personalities might be just as effective as ‘professional’ teachers with experience and qualifications. Thornbury’s article was published in *ELT Journal* together with a critical response by Clemente (2002), who chided him for not supporting professionalism in language teaching. Nevertheless, many ex-pat, native-speaker language teachers do indeed embark on their careers via this unprofessional route. Not so for non-native teachers who have, at least, to prove their competence in the language (but cf Medgyes, 1999). The permeability of the profession of language teaching, the ease and frequency with which teachers enter and leave it, has led Johnston (1997; 1999), for example, to argue that Teaching English as a Foreign

Language cannot be regarded as a career at all². In particular, ex-pats tend to occupy positions in educational institutions that are relatively marginal and insecure (Johnston, 1999).

Nevertheless, as evidenced by the publishers' exhortations on books, journals and websites, and on the promotional materials of universities and other institutions offering courses in teacher education, the discourse of professionalisation has virtually come to exclude any other possible characterizations. Despite this, however, just what this discourse entails is subject to variation and contradiction, problems that have led some authors to talk of the 'dilemma' (Richards, 1990) and even the 'crisis' (Furlong, 2000) of teacher professionalism.

1.2.1. Professionalisation of Second Language Teacher Education

In his account of how English Language Teaching emerged as 'an autonomous profession' during the twentieth century, Howatt (1984) provides the following, more elaborate, definition:

A distinctive framework of basic principle is a necessary condition for an autonomous profession, but not a sufficient one. There must also be a sense of coherence and stability reinforced by the establishment of institutions with various functions: the regulation of entry, for example, the maintenance of standards, the provision of initial and higher-level training, career structures, communication through journals, associations, conferences, and so on. Finally,

² However, he later concedes (Johnston, 2003) that this may in fact have been as much a reflection of the social and economic instability in Poland at the time he conducted his study of teachers there than an inherent and universal characteristic of the occupation in which they were employed.

there must be some commitment to research and development for the future (Howatt, 1984, p.213).

The rapid growth of English language institutions together with the various functions that Howatt describes, both in public and private sectors, since the 1960s is indisputable. However, the 'necessary condition' for professional status, that is, 'a distinctive framework of basic principle' is harder to verify.

A landmark in the literature dealing with professionalism in second language teaching was the publication of a collection of essays edited by Richards and Nunan (1990). In the opening essay, Richards (1990) claimed that a field can be defined as professional to the extent that it has 'a sense of autonomy, with its own knowledge base, paradigms, and research agenda' (p.3). He quoted earlier research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, cited in Richards, 1990) which maintained that members of a profession employ particular methods and procedures deriving from a body of theoretical knowledge and research and argued that this had led to an excessive emphasis on training new teachers in methods and procedures. In Richards' opinion, this kind of 'micro' perspective on teaching ignores the 'macro' dimension, that is the multiple and complex influences on each teaching situation imposed by a whole host of factors in the social context. The solution for teacher educators, in the view of Richards and other authors in this book, is to promote a 'holistic' education. Unlike training, which aims merely to add skills to an existing repertoire, this type of education should seek to change ways of thinking as well as of action. This aspiration leads to a dilemma, however, since, to be a profession, language teaching requires some codification of its practices (knowledge base, paradigms and research agenda), while individual teachers

in the field need to develop the 'art' of teaching which relies on their awareness of and sensitivity to the macro-dimensions of the teaching situation, which may be counter to the best practices of the profession. In other words, the dilemma of the profession represents the conflict between a desire to set universal standards and a recognition that individual teaching situations are context-specific.

There is thus some contradiction between the rather conservative notion of a profession, with agreed standards and practices to which practicing teachers are expected to adhere, and the notion of the professional development of language teachers, which puts as much priority on the experience and understandings of individual teachers as it does on the standards and practices of the profession as a whole. This, in fact, is the message carried by a number of the authors in Richards and Nunan, (e.g. Day, 1990; Gebhard, Gaitan & Oprandy, 1990; Pennington, 1990). The primary goal of teachers' professional development should, therefore, be a better understanding of one's own teaching practice and of the context in which it is undertaken. Teachers are thus, to become investigators (Gebhard, Gaitan & Oprandy, 1990), ethnographers (Roberts et al, 2000) and researchers (Freeman, 1996; 1998) in the interests not only of their students and also of their own professional development.

However, this shift of priority in favour of practicing teachers is not necessarily beneficial to the establishment of 'a knowledge base, paradigms, and a research agenda'. Englund (1996) makes this point reflecting on the differences between professionalisation, which relates to the occupation as a whole, and professionalism, which refers only to the individual, and concludes that professional teachers are 'a good thing' only if professionalism means 'didactic competence' (p.83).

The trend in recent literature in language teacher education and teacher knowledge has been to explore teachers' development as it occurs in specific teaching or working situations. Exploring this from a cognitive perspective, Woods (1996) uses the concept of 'schemata' to describe the underlying beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK) of novice teachers. Other researchers have used narrative as a device for investigating teacher knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly, for example, use the term 'professional knowledge landscapes' (1995) to encapsulate the complexity of the environments in which teachers work. Using the narratives of two novice teachers, they uncover the discrepancy between the teachers' practice in the safety of the classroom and the demands that are imposed by what Clandinin and Connelly call 'the conduit', by which they mean the curriculum, the administration, and other teachers. It is only gradually that teachers learn to act and think in ways that are sanctioned by that conduit, or as Connelly and Clandinin put it, that the 'cover stories' become 'stories to live by' (1999). Teachers' identities, they claim, are 'made up from an amalgam of children, curriculum, beliefs, values and personal histories ... (also) parents, community, board of education, administration, and administrators' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.171). There is no mention here of a 'professional field', unless that is included in curriculum, board of education or administration. But, as Freeman comments, given the actual physical isolation of teachers, working in separate rooms with different groups of students, like Lortie's metaphor of eggs in the separate sections of their carton, 'it is hardly surprising that a disciplinary community of teaching has not arisen' (Freeman, 1998, p.11).

Some teacher educators have sought to establish a middle way between an authoritative professional field and individual language teachers working at self-development in isolation. One route has been the promotion of ‘voices from the field’, (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2002), that is, the publication in journals and books of teachers’ own or collaborative articulation of local knowledge. Another has been the promotion of cooperative research (Edge, 1992; 2002), or simply conversations between teachers (Mann, 2002), based on the premise that knowledge (whether in action or not) is changed through understanding, or simply through raised awareness (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999).

1.2.2. Professionalism and expertise

In the previous section, I distinguished between professionalisation, which refers to the enhancement of the teaching occupation as a profession, and professionalism, which attends more to the practices and attitudes of individual practitioners. In this section, I focus on the latter by examining literature that deals with teacher knowledge and expertise.

What is it that distinguishes experts from other people? How is it that experts can do with consummate ease what other people can only do with considerable difficulty? What do expert teachers do? What do they know? Polanyi (1958) argued that expert knowledge, whatever the content, differs from ordinary knowledge in that it comprises a much larger base of hidden or tacit knowledge. Polanyi’s point was that experts simply had more knowledge and experience than other people. Experts thus

appear to be able to short-cut many of the problem-solving steps that non-experts have to take, and moreover, are able to see ahead and intuit the ‘promisingness’ of situations. This may give the impression that expert performance is automatic, effortless and fluid.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) however, suggest that this is not always the case. Rather, what characterizes the expert practitioner is an attitude of deliberation and reflection towards ill-defined problems (see also Schön, 1983; 1991), a continuous seeking to improve on one’s practice and extend the boundaries of competence. Thus, for Bereiter and Scardamalia, what distinguishes an expert from a non-expert is not merely different knowledge of or competence in a complex and difficult practice, such as teaching, (although this is very likely true too), but rather the critical attitude that an expert practitioner adopts towards it

A recent publication by Tsui (2003) draws substantially on the ideas developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia, and because her focus is on expertise in language teachers, this work is considered in some depth. From her study of four ESL teachers in a Hong Kong secondary school, Tsui confirms their chief assertions about the cognitive characteristics shared by experts. Thus, Tsui sees expert teachers as not only possessing a rich and integrated mental conceptualisation of what they do, but also an ability to reflect on and monitor their practice and theory. Expert teachers are flexible in their planning and performance in individual lessons, but, unlike novices and non-experts, they have a clear picture of how those individual units or lessons fit into a curriculum, how lessons and curriculum apply in the context of the school and society, and finally, how all of that meshes with the expert teacher’s own pedagogical

philosophy. Experts thus have a rich and integrated knowledge base, which is continually being shaped in the dialectical relationship between teacher knowledge and context.

Tsui's findings are based on case studies of four teachers, one expert and three non-experts. The expert teacher in this study is Marina (all the teachers have pseudonyms), a highly successful teacher of eight years standing, and a former post-graduate student of Tsui's. The other teachers are younger and more junior in the school hierarchy. Eva and Ching, whom Tsui declares 'would be considered either proficient or competent teachers in the novice-expert literature' (p.71), have five years teaching experience. There are clear differences between them: Eva is like Marina in many ways, particularly in her tendency toward self-reflection and her constant striving for improvement in her teaching; Ching remains lacking in self-confidence, unable to establish good relationships particularly with the more senior students. The fourth teacher, Genie, had at the start of the eighteen month study been teaching for only one year and is categorised by Tsui as a novice.

Tsui admits at the outset that there is no clear objective way to define who is an expert. She uses a number of criteria to justify her choice of Marina, including her success and popularity with students, her reputation amongst colleagues and superiors in her school and with others in the teaching community, and Tsui's own subjective opinion of her formed over several years as her postgraduate supervisor and mentor. It is not so clear, however, why another teacher, Eva, is not an expert. Tsui reasons that despite the similarities - the willingness to experiment, and to seek help and advice from more experienced colleagues - a crucial difference between the two is that Eva

lacks a coherent theoretical framework for understanding and integrating the curriculum and effective ways of teaching. Whereas Marina appears to have successfully integrated her knowledge of English linguistics into her syllabus, adapting the textbook and materials in order to achieve her pedagogical objectives, Eva is sometimes unable to achieve this match. This, Tsui argues, (p.183) is because she is guided primarily by pragmatic motives and personal practical experience and not by a principled theoretical understanding of how subject matter and pedagogy might work together to greater effect. In Tsui's view, this shortcoming is what prevents Eva from being able to develop true expertise as an ESL teacher. Eva, like Marina, does work 'on the edge of competence', drawing on her own experience and knowledge, as well as seeking to learn from her students and from colleagues, in order to make herself a better teacher. What Tsui seems to suggest, however, is that Eva will not be able to raise her expertise to the level of Marina without a principled theoretical understanding, gained, for example, through an academic course.

Marina's experiences in the classroom, and particularly in her curriculum reform initiative, lead Tsui to the conclusion that expertise is a social rather than individual characteristic. It is important, she explains, 'to see expertise as "multiple" because the pooling together of expertise is essential to the achievement of the highest level of performance. In understanding the latter it is important to see expertise as "distributed" because it is only through constant engagement in professional discourse communities that expert knowledge can be developed and maintained' (p.281). With this argument, Tsui attempts to cross over from a psychological to a social understanding of the nature of expertise. However, in doing so, she raises a number of questions concerning the generalisability of her assertions on the nature of expertise.

1.2.3. Professional Communities

Another question that one might ask of Tsui is what exactly she means by ‘professional discourse communities’. Is it the school where the study was set? Is it the looser community of teachers who participate in Tsui’s internet discussion group? Is it the much wider international field of language teachers, or Applied Linguistics? If there are answers to these questions, they are suggested implicitly in the contradiction between the assertion that Eva will not raise her level of expertise without theoretical knowledge, and the implication that the English department as a whole does raise its level of expertise through the experience of implementing a process-writing syllabus. The difference between these two situations is that Marina does have the theoretical background as a result of her academic background and ongoing professional development through the internet discussion group, and therefore is in a position to act as a conduit to the other teachers. What Tsui does not make clear is that expertise may be multiple and distributed, but not all forms of expertise are regarded as equally valid.

The term ‘professional discourse communities’ which is included in the above quotation from Tsui evokes the work of a number of theorists who touch on expertise as one aspect of the very large and complex notion of community, which has stimulated research and reflection across of range of academic fields from sociology (Bauman, 2001) to literary theory (Fish, 1980) or composition (Bizzell, 1992). In this section, I deal with some that I have found to be relevant to an understanding of organizations or communities that define and maintain certain standards of practice.

The term *discourse community* was coined by Swales (1990) to denote a group of people with ‘a broadly agreed set of common public goals and mechanisms of intercommunication amongst members’ (p.27). Discourse communities utilise particular ways of communicating, known as genres, which are determined by expert members of the discourse community. New members are obliged to learn what is permissible in the genre, as regards both content and form.

Swales’s concept of a discourse community is fairly restricted. In his first book, the example he uses is a group of stamp collectors, the Hong Kong Study Circle (HKSC). Critics have claimed that this is not a good illustration, arguing that it is too small, too specialised and too limited in the amount of time that members would devote to the activity (Bex, 1996; Johns, 1997). In other words, a discourse community should constitute a more significant part of any individual’s life, such as, for example, her occupation. Furthermore, most communities that seem to possess genres are far more complex than Swales’ group of philatelists. Van Nostrand’s (1994) study of R&D commissioning by the U.S. Department of Defense reveals that while the discourse community he identifies conforms to Swales’s definition, this does not account for the constant shifts of affiliation among its various participants (DOD buyers, companies tendering for contract etc). Van Nostrand therefore suggests extending Swales’s definition to incorporate notions of audience, which explain the discourse community’s dynamic quality but which serve to blur the boundaries of community.

In a later work, Swales (1998) incorporated many of the suggestions that were made in the interim in a study of three very different academic communities housed in the university building in which Swales works. Of the three communities – the first floor

computing centre, the second floor botanical department, and Swales's own English department on the top floor - only the botanists, with their relatively coherent and unchanging genre, qualify unequivocally as a discourse community, in Swales's view.

This conclusion highlights one of the main practical problems that impelled Swales to embark on a study of genre and discourse communities in the first place. What Swales was seeking was a way of pinning down and codifying what is typical about academic writing, so that students, in particular those whose native language is not English, could study it and apply it to their own writing. This ambition to extrapolate a 'system' from a wealth of linguistic data is what has motivated some of the greatest twentieth century linguists, from Saussure to Chomsky to Halliday. Giddens (1990) explains that this kind of 'disembedding of expert systems' is characteristic of, and indeed a consequence of 'modernity'. The difficulty

with most academic genres, however, is that, except for some instances, such as the community of botanists, they only work if they are 'embedded'.

Whereas Swales was interested in whether a single department could be said to conform to his idea of a discourse community, Becher (1989) conducted a wide ranging survey of academics in universities across Britain to investigate whether different academics fields formed substantially different kinds of communities, which he termed *disciplinary communities*. He found that the disciplines could be categorised along two continua: one hard to soft, the other pure to applied. In accordance with this classification, predominantly hard disciplines, such as mathematics and physics, would be more likely to be distinguished by tightly knit,

cohesive academic clans engaged in the study of a restricted, densely structured and clearly bounded area of knowledge, while the soft disciplines, such as modern languages and sociology, would tend more to be typified by loose knit communities in an unrestricted, inchoate and relatively permeable disciplinary field.

Becher pointed out that his model is full of exceptions: He found that some hard disciplines, such as mechanical engineering, pharmacy (applied) and chemistry (pure) are relatively divergent, while history (soft, pure) is relatively convergent as a disciplinary community. Becher suggests two reasons for the anomalies. Firstly, it could be that external influences operate, especially in those areas with numerous applications, to weaken the links between communities and the forms of knowledge they study. Secondly, the expert knowledge of certain disciplines may be no more than “the aggregate of their epistemologically heterogeneous specialisms” (1989, p.158). Thus, instead of disciplines, perhaps the community resides only in the individual specialism, which may comprise the entire discipline, but, particularly in the softer disciplines, is more likely to be one of many struggling with other specialisms for legitimacy and power within the discipline. Becher’s model seems to concur with Swales’s (1998) findings about the nature of the communities that existed in his building. Like Swales, Becher finds that, unlike the hard, pure disciplines, the soft, applied academic fields do not appear to conform to a notion of community at all.

While Swales and Becher are primarily concerned with the nature of the practices that characterise a discourse or disciplinary community, the focus of interest for Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) is in the people who constitute its membership,

and the processes by which they are transformed by engaging in the practices of the community. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning takes place in social situations in which the learner takes on a gradually more complex, integrated role as a member of a community. From the outset, learners are accepted as 'legitimate peripheral participators', whose membership of a *community of practice* is necessitated by that community's need to reproduce itself. Learning thus entails the gradual moulding of a novice member's identity into that of a full member. In that process, learners have to become assimilated into a discourse, a way of speaking and behaving which incorporates the range of cultural meanings and values that are shared by other expert members of that community.

Examples of communities of practice that Lave and Wenger use in this book include West African tailors, Mexican midwives, supermarket butchers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and ship navigators. Wenger's later elaboration of the theory (1998) uses the claims processing department of a major US medical insurer. What makes all of these examples communities of practice is the mutual engagement of their members in a joint and shared enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p.73). This does not mean that all members participate in the community to the same extent, or that they all identify with it with the same degree of commitment. But it does entail a shared experience in one locality and a mutual accountability for the success or continuation of the enterprise. This emphasis on the physical proximity of members is what distinguishes it crucially from, say, Swales's discourse communities, such as his stamp collectors or botanists, which could be spread over several continents. Indeed, for Swales, neither physical proximity nor shared enterprise were sufficient criteria for the formation of a discourse community.

Theorising apart, the notion of community has nevertheless captured the imagination of publishers and professional organisations. For example, the TESOL website on Standards for Teachers of Adult Learners includes the following in a list of standards for language teachers:

Commitment to Professionalism

Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and the community at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities. (www.tesol.org/s-tesol)

Certainly, the notion of community implied here is closer to Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities' than to Wenger's communities of practice. Like imagined communities, they are more rhetorical than real, more an idealization than an empirical description³. It is also quite different from the picture of professionalism that we had from Richards and others (Richards & Nunan, 1990). Important questions could be asked here concerning how teachers understand the relationship of second language teaching to these three different communities, indeed what they take these communities to be. Similarly, we need to ask whether and how teachers do change themselves and their communities in the course of and as part of their professional development. In the following section, I shall show that for many researchers, the idea of language teachers changing their communities can be fairly unpalatable.

³ The notion of community and the responsibility of the community member to change himself and the community is perhaps most similar to Bauman's notion of praxis and responsible communities (1999; 2001).

1.3. Cultural Identity

There is an intuitive sense in which professional identity and cultural identity are quite different things: what we do in our lives, our career histories are to a large extent governed by the conscious choices we make. Our cultural identity, however, is generally something we are born with or into. We inherit a nationality, ethnicity and a native language or languages, and it is usually very difficult, if not impossible, to change these things. Although the term ‘culture’ has come to signify a far broader range of meanings in applied linguistics research over recent decades (see Atkinson, 1999), in the language classroom, it is used most saliently to denote the practices, beliefs, worldview, ideology and so on of the speakers of the target language and is defined in contrast with the culture of the learners.

1.3.1. Native and non-native English teachers

Until the mid 1980s, the significance of a teacher’s language identity, that is, whether she was a native speaker of English or not, was not questioned. Then Paikeday’s (1985) provocatively titled *The Native Speaker is Dead* appeared arguing that the influence of Chomsky’s theory of the native speaker as the ‘ideal’ speaker of a language had come to bear on employment practices resulting in discrimination against non-native speakers (see also Canagarajah, 1999⁴). Paikeday urged that ‘native speakership should not be used as a criterion for excluding certain categories of people from language teaching, dictionary editing, and similar functions’ (1985, p.88). Instead, he proposed making a distinction between proficient speakers and ideal speakers, and although a special role might still be reserved for ideal (native) speakers

⁴ Neither Paikeday nor Canagarajah are criticizing Chomsky so much as those who have used Chomsky’s abstract theories about the nature of language to justify their treatment of people.

as a model for language planning and curriculum design, proficient (non-native) teachers were in no way inferior as arbiters of linguistic accuracy.

Medgyes (1992; 1994), however, himself a non-native speaker, is far less confident about the competency of the merely proficient speaker: 'We suffer from an inferiority complex caused by glaring defects in our knowledge of English' he announces hyperbolically. 'We are in constant distress as we realize how little we know about the language we are supposed to teach' (Medgyes, 1994; p.10). Nevertheless, this deficiency in non-native speaker teachers is, Medgyes concedes, balanced out by the advantages that they have and that native speakers lack, namely a better understanding of the language learning process in which their students are engaged, and their standing as models of successful language learning.

Whereas Medgyes (1992) maintains that non-native teachers are worth no more and no less than native speaker teachers, others have sought to promote the status of non-native teachers (see Braine, 1999). A number of researchers have observed that the unspoken belief in the superiority of native speakers and their methodologies endures in institutions and among the students who study in them. Tang (1997), for example, found in a survey of non-native ESL teachers in Hong Kong that her participants believed that native teachers were superior with regard to communicative aspects of English, although they also felt that such teachers were better able to address errors if they shared the mother tongue of the students.

Some researchers have been more interested in teachers' perceptions about attitudes towards their identity within the institution and among students. Amin (1997), who is

an ethnic Pakistani, conducted a study with five ethnic minority ESL teachers in Canada. Her participants believed that their students make a number of problematic assumptions about the ideal English teacher, for example, that only White people can be native speakers of English, and that only native speakers know 'real' English. A comparable study by Liu (1999) on non-White student teachers working in US universities revealed some similar anxieties. The teachers in his study claimed they faced resistance from students who felt they were being 'short-changed' in being taught English by teachers who were not native speakers. Thomas (1999) also records similar attitudes in her own experience as an ESL teacher in the United States, although she relates that eventually her students' attitudes changed, with some of them recognising that her non-native status was actually an advantage.

Liu's (1999) study, cited above, gives a more surprising illustration of the extent to which identity can be constructed by teachers. One of the student teachers in his study, a Filipino, was brought up to speak English as her first language, only acquiring Tagalog at a later stage in her childhood. However, for her students she identifies herself as a Filipino and Tagalog speaker rather than as a native English speaker, explaining that in doing so she emphasises her affiliation with a national community, rather than with a linguistic group. Even though she is a native speaker, she positions herself as a non-native speaker because that is what the students expect. The way this teacher positions herself as a way of defending or strengthening her status in her class is a provocative example of Davies' assertion that native speaker identity is 'largely a matter of self-ascription, not something given' and that 'those who claim native speaker status [...] do have responsibilities in terms of confidence and identity.' (1991, p.8 and 2003, p.163)

1.3.2. English, Englishes and cultural politics

The studies mentioned above share a model that divides speakers into native and non-natives. This model is challenged, however by other commentators, many of who, as Davies (2003) observes, tend to work outside the United States or Britain and thus have a different perspective on issues of cultural identity. Kachru (1992), for example, starts from the premise that English is now spoken as a native language in many countries around the world, and is also the language of international communication for almost all the others. However, not all Englishes, or English speakers are equal. In a graphic image of concentric circles, Kachru represents the English-speaking nations in terms of their closeness to a center of power and prestige. Thus, the inner circle represents countries whose version of English commands most respect (namely, the predominantly White, Anglo-Saxon countries, North America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand). Surrounding the inner circle is a circle of countries where English is spoken as one of two or more native languages and may be used as the language of state (such as India, the Philippines, Nigeria etc). In terms of population, there are far more people who belong to this group. Finally, an outer circle consists of countries such as Japan where English is not acquired as a mother tongue nor is it used as a language of state, but it is widely taught as a language of international communication. The further away from the centre, the less power and prestige the version of English is likely to command.

Commentators like Davies (1991; 2003) and Honey (1997) have noted that a widespread questioning of the authority of Standard English stems from a sociolinguistic assumption that all languages and dialects are 'linguistically equal', in

other words, all adhere to their own rules of grammaticality and coherence, and all are equally capable of expressing complex ideas. Honey's position is that such thinking constitutes a 'language myth' and that placing equal value on non-standard forms of the language leads to a failure to educate socially disadvantaged children in the powerful Standard English which, he argues, is the only effective way to better their situation. Honey's stance, however, is not one that is widely shared, particularly among those whose chief interest (unlike Honey's) lies in English teaching in countries outside the inner circle of English-speaking countries.

One particularly influential line of thought has been developed by critics (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; 1998) who have sought to understand the use and spread of English around the world from historical and political perspectives. Phillipson (1992), for example, shows that the British Council's efforts to develop English Language Teaching in Africa in the 1960s were to some extent motivated by 'linguistic imperialism', the imposition of a kind of English language teaching modeled on British education and employing 'ideal' British native speakers as a way of maintaining a political and economic foothold over Britain's former colonies. That the British Council and other first-world English-speaking representatives of power were so successful was, according to Phillipson, due to the perpetration of a belief in the superiority of a native-speaker version of English and in the teaching methods and materials devised by native speakers, a belief that Phillipson terms 'linguicism'. Pennycook (1994; 1998), too, uses historical evidence in the form of policy documents and letters to support a similar claim that English teaching in the British colonies was neither 'natural, neutral or beneficial' to the people who learned it.

Elsewhere, Canagarajah (1999) also addresses teacher identity, although his focus is on the local teacher in the context of ELT in Sri Lanka, and his basic premise is more critical toward western methodologies and materials. Basing his research on Phillipson's notion of linguisticism, he claims that students and teachers alike are sucked into the ideological belief that the study of English is beneficial and that they should aspire to master the kind of English that is modeled by native speakers and writers, using state-of-the-art methodologies and materials promoted by the inner circle English speaking countries. Canagarajah shows that adherence to these beliefs ignores the realities of social conditions in which English has to be taught (he begins the book with a description of an English class in a rural village, lacking in basic facilities and materials, and interrupted by the noise of helicopter gunships flying overhead). Worse, this kind of linguisticism also leads to a belief, in this case, that Sri Lankans are inherently inferior as users of English. The solution, Canagarajah argues, is for Sri Lankan teachers and learners to 'appropriate English', to become owners of the language, and adapt it to their own needs.

Canagarajah's supposition that to learn a language in this way is to be dominated by a set of ideological beliefs is arguable however. The illustrations he provides of a young teacher using inappropriate methods in her teaching, or of a postgraduate student failing to incorporate his own experience into his thesis could be interpreted as pedagogical rather than ideological; in other words, their unsuccessful performance could perhaps more plausibly be interpreted as inexperience than the result of buying into the thinking that 'British is Best'. However, this is not to say that culture or ideology are irrelevant. In her introductory article to a special edition on identity in

language learning in *TESOL Quarterly*, Norton (1997) asks, 'Are TESOL educators perpetuating Western imperialism in different parts of the world?' (p. 423). Although researchers who deal with third world countries (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999) would argue that they probably are, in other parts of the world such a formulation may overstate the power of education and teachers, and underestimate the complexity of the relationship between the culture of a society and the individual within that society.

1.3.3. Small cultures, big discourses

One researcher who is taken to task by Canagarajah (1999, pp.43-46) for underestimating the influences of global cultural politics on English language classrooms is Holliday. Holliday, however, has consistently held the position (1994; 1999; 2001; 2003) that of more importance are the classroom cultures (1994) or small cultures (1999) that are the product of the teacher and the learners who participate in them. In his first book (1994), Holliday uses his research into teachers and teaching practices in Egyptian higher education as the basis for a proposal that foreign teachers need to adopt an 'appropriate methodology', one that is sensitive to prevailing practices and beliefs in the social context. All too often, Holliday observes, new methods and techniques fail because the teacher has not taken account of the social context. The main import of Holliday's contribution is that it represents a shift of attention away from the methodologies themselves to the 'classroom cultures' in which they are to be employed and the ability of the foreign teacher to adapt the methodologies in a way that ensures students' receptivity to them. Failure to do so can result in killing off the

delicate 'coral garden' culture (Breen, 1986) that characterizes an effective classroom

environment.

This is not to say that small cultures are the only kind of cultures there are. Holliday also describes two distinct ‘professional-academic cultures’ as an explanation for the difficulties experienced not only by ex-pat teachers, but also by local teachers using materials developed typically in the center. Drawing on two typologies of educational ‘codes’ described by Bernstein (1974, cited in Holliday, 1994, pp. 69-80), Holliday argues that state educational institutions, such as the Egyptian university where he conducted his research, tend to exhibit a ‘collectionist code’, in that subjects are drawn from a ‘common knowledge universe, with strong boundaries and high traditional status’ (p.72)⁵. The professional-academic culture of ex-pat English teachers, however, is characterized by an ‘integrationist code’, in which subject boundaries tend to be blurred and teachers collaborate on shared overall objectives. The disparity between these two codes leads to what Holliday calls ‘professional-academic schizophrenia’ (p.73) when teachers seek to apply ‘integrationist’ methodologies directly to classes that are situated in a strongly ‘collectionist’ educational environment. What is needed, he argues (2001), is cultural continuity to facilitate the success of curriculum reforms. However, what so often happens instead is that professional discourses overshadow the cultural preferences that prevail in the classroom or school.

In subsequent works, Holliday has developed the concepts of ‘culturism’ (2001) and ‘native-speakerism’ (2003) (akin to Phillipson’s ‘linguicism’). These two concepts invoke what Holliday calls an ‘us-them’ divide, whereby foreign teachers and

⁵ See also Giddens’ (1990) ‘disembedded expert systems’

materials implicitly privilege the native speaker, western cultural values, and more insidiously, the teaching methodologies that are central to present-day TESOL professional practice. However, Holliday also rejects the opposite approach, 'critical cultural relativism', which aim to undermine any kind of hegemonic values or practices, but which may leave students with no solid ground on which to develop their own best practice. Holliday's answer is for the teacher and students together to find a way between these two extremes. Considering the applicability of student autonomy to EFL classrooms, for example, he advocates that the solution is to leave it to the students to define the concept of autonomy in their own terms, rather than imposing on them that of a teacher or outside expert (Holliday, 2003).

Holliday's warnings about the conflicts that arise when professional discourses misrepresent the needs and identities of individuals and groups of learners have been illustrated in other research. Harklau (1999), for example, describes how well-intentioned efforts by ESL teachers to encourage students to share about 'their' culture serve to alienate students who for various reasons do not want to identify themselves as 'foreign'. Rampton (1995) and Leung et al (1997) have similarly drawn attention to problems resulting from the inaccurate oversimplification of ethnic identities in British secondary schools. Clearly there is a problem when students are misrepresented, since this misrepresents also their needs as language learners. But the question remains, can an 'us-them' positioning be avoided? Is this not inherent in the very act of learning a foreign language?

1.3.4. Cultural Representatives

Despite the dangers of stereotyping, many commentators have emphasized the

primacy of culture in language learning. Byram and Morgan and their colleagues (1994) argue that the aim of learning a foreign language should be to see how familiar words and meanings are contextualised differently in the target language, allowing insight into other people's cultures and some idea about how other people might regard our own. Kramsch (1993) lends support to this contention in her work on culture in language teaching. Although, like Byram et al, Kramsch sees the language learning process as a path to greater understanding about how native speakers of the language interpret and respond to different situations, she also offers the following caveat:

[Teachers] together with the students [...] enact the traditional culture of the institutional setting in which they were trained; they echo the native culture of the society in which they were socialized; they act out the behaviour of speakers from the target society, which they have studied; their discourse and that of their students are full of invisible quotes, borrowed consciously or unconsciously from those who taught them – parents, teachers, mentors – and from those who have helped build the discourse of their discipline. In fact, language teachers are so much teachers of culture that culture has often become invisible to them (p.48).

For Kramsch, the task for teachers is to interrogate their own culture and together with their students look for a 'third space', a kind of critical detachment from which to view both languages and cultures. However, if culture is invisible to them, does interrogation necessarily remove their blind spots? Are teachers, consciously or unconsciously, representatives of a particular culture? And if so, if they are native

speakers of the target language, is this a problem?

One study that has been of particular interest to my research is Duff and Uchida's (1997) ethnographic inquiry into the working practices and beliefs of four teachers (two Japanese, two American) in Japan. The main conclusion of their study is that culture is not a body of knowledge, but rather a set of assumptions implicit in teaching practices and in negotiated relationships with students. The two Japanese teachers in this study, for example, although sharing a similar cultural and educational history, differ significantly in their understandings of language and culture, and this influences the way they identify themselves as teachers. For example, one of these teachers, Miki, sees herself as a 'linguistically oriented Japanese teacher' and believes that the task of teaching culture should be left to native speaking teachers. By contrast, the other Japanese teacher, Kimiko, believes that language and culture are inseparable and that her role as a teacher should be to raise her students' awareness of cross-cultural issues.

Similar contrasts are seen in the attitudes of the American teachers. One of these teachers, Carol, was reluctant to impose her cultural beliefs or values on her students, seeing that as outside her remit as a teacher of language. The other, Danny, on the other hand, deliberately modeled his role in the classroom on US chat show host, David Letterman. Although Danny was an extremely popular teacher with the mostly middle-aged, female students, the authors of the study wonder about the pedagogical value of this kind of class, and also question the ethics of 'imposing' such culturally specific values and behaviours on the students. What they do not question, however, is how the learners themselves feel about the role that Danny projects. Whatever the

misgivings of the authors of the study, it appears that the learners in

Danny's class were willing participants in his 'show', entering fully into the playful spirit of the class, and sometimes even turning the tables on him with their teasing.

What is so tantalising about Duff and Uchida's study is the way it undermines accepted notions of cultural identity and brings to view significant differences in the practices and beliefs of teachers from similar backgrounds. Clearly, cultural identity plays a part; but how is it to be understood? As I have indicated above, the role of chat show host, part entertainer, part master of ceremonies, that Danny plays in the class, the attitudes and beliefs that are implicit in his teaching, all these appear to be quite acceptable to his learners, but this does not fit the discourse of good teaching that is implied by Duff and Uchida, or Norton, who as editor, wrote an introduction to this article, or indeed by the other three teachers in the study. Although Duff and Uchida suggest that the role he adopts is entirely foreign to the Japanese educational culture, it does have parallels in Japanese culture generally, specifically in the popular TV chat shows hosted by energetic and sometimes outrageous *tarentos* (TV celebrities). Bolstered by his popularity, Danny's confidence in his strategy does not appear to be tempered by any compunction to behave otherwise by the company he works for or any other institution.

Duff and Uchida's four teachers provide clear examples of how teachers 'negotiate' their identity primarily with their students, but also, to varying degrees, with the language schools or teaching institutions for which they work. Teachers negotiate their identity, it is true, but in order to understand that process, we need to inquire

what they bring to the classroom in the first place. We need to inquire what past experiences have shaped their understandings of what it to be a teacher. We need to know how they view their role in the classroom and in the institution If differences in teachers' beliefs and practices are as important as Duff and Uchida's study suggests, then we need to examine them in a wider explanatory framework, a framework which extends back in time to past teaching and learning experiences, and within present working conditions, outwards to a range of social circumstances in which teachers' beliefs and practices are actualised or constrained.

1. 4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the way identity has been addressed in the literature concerning English Language Teaching and teachers, focusing on the areas of professional and cultural identity. I began by drawing attention to some of the problems in defining second language teaching as a profession. Then, turning to professionalism in second language teaching, I detected a paradigm shift in attitudes towards professional development. Whereas in the past, teacher training was based on a decontextualised body of knowledge, now increasingly knowledge and expertise are regarded as developing within and out of practice in real social contexts. This has meant that the teacher education literature has moved away from an emphasis on methods and procedures to focus on the narrated experiences and reflections of individual teachers or on small, local collaborations of teachers. However, encouraging teachers to improve their own practice by trying to understand what they do with reference first of all to the social context may paradoxically be at odds with the enhancement of a professional field of second language teachers.

Some of the points discussed under professional identity, particularly with regard to communities, also apply to cultural identity in language teachers. Taking cultural identity first of all as language identity, commentators agree that from a pedagogical point of view, there is no evidence to suggest that native speakers are worth more than non-native teachers, even though many students, prospective employers of language teachers, and even non-native teachers believe that they are. Teacher identity is also seen to be problematic in EFL settings, for various reasons. One problem lies in the global power disparity whereby inappropriate methodologies and teaching materials are foisted on poor countries that may find it difficult to resist. In the linguistic model, the villains are somehow depersonalized as western powers or large faceless publishing corporations or discourses. Holliday, however, shows that foreign teachers also suffer when their methods fall flat, and suggests ways in which they can make their teaching more culturally sensitive. Finally, although it is probably desirable for teachers to gain more insight into their own as well as their students' cultural beliefs, there may be some benefit to their being representatives of a particular culture.

Although this has been a wide-ranging review covering two main aspects of identity, a number of common preoccupations emerge. Identity tends to denote an uneasy tension between what people are, and what they or others think they should be. Thus, in the literature on both professional and cultural identity, there is a persistent underlying sensitivity about whose values and whose practices are best. These tensions are at the core of most thinking that has been done about identity in the social sciences and the following chapter traces a number of different ways in which theorists have defined the concept. In that chapter and the following chapter on methodology, I shall be looking for a way of conceptualising identity that preserves

the tensions that I have described, and increases our understanding of how and why identity matters, particularly for language teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTITY AS POSITION

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I touched on the proliferation of theories surrounding the concept of identity. As I indicated in relating the experiences of Gwen Gallagher and my own journey into teaching, our cultural identity is relevant to our professional lives, but the very complexity of our identities renders this proposition highly problematic, both theoretically and practically. The concept that I will be using in this thesis attempts to preserve the complexity of identity in drawing on a postmodern idea of ‘strategic positioning’ and in this chapter I shall review the thinking of a number of authors who have contributed to, or share this perspective in one way or another. My purpose in doing so is to make clear a theoretical framework that will provide a rationale for the methodology used in generating and analyzing data in this study.

My starting point in thinking of identity in terms of a position comes from Social Theory and the work of Pierre Bourdieu. In particular, Bourdieu’s theory of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1988; 1990; 1991; 1993) suggests that what are traditionally thought of as the characteristics or dispositions of the individual should in fact be attributed to that individual’s position, both in a social system of interconnecting fields and along a historical timeline of accumulated experiences. This provides important insights into the importance of socially acquired, or inherited, dispositions, to the extent that not only life choices, such as choice of career, but even such apparently individual characteristics such as taste, are solely attributable to social acquisition. Lemke (1995) draws on Bourdieu’s theory in his own statement about

how all parts of the social system (and Lemke includes also the physiological individual) can be compared to 'open dynamic systems' that are described in the study of thermodynamics, which must consume their environment, and thus must move and change in order to survive. If this is applied to social systems, then it becomes clear that these systems are thoroughly political, forever changing their position, in order to survive or at least to gain an advantage

One of the main criticisms of Bourdieu's theory (e.g. Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone, 1993) is that it is overly deterministic, that is, an individual's position, as well as her range of choices for future action, is limited by her membership of particular social groups. In this way, the social is stressed at the expense of individual agency and experience. I have turned, therefore, to theorists who favour a phenomenological approach in exploring social experience from the perspective of the individual.

Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) introduces the idea that identity is theatrical, a role that one performs. This analogy captures the sense that the individual's beliefs and thoughts can be articulated only in accordance with pre-set social conventions or scripts. Goffman in turn has been an important influence on Gee's (1996) theory of Discourse, which explains how people are constrained by the conventions of the powerful, yet at the same time have to exploit them and change them in order to survive and thrive. Mathews (1998; 2000) also provides insights on the ways in which people 'choose' particular identities, living their lives according to ideas and images that they find in the 'global cultural supermarket'.

The notions of social roles and discourse explain people's interactions with each other, but social identity is more than just the roles people play. More importantly,

social identity depends on membership of a group or community (Tajfel, 1978, Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) is based on the premise that people are (or become) aware of their membership of a particular social group, and that this social group is regarded by its members as distinctive and, in certain respects, superior to other comparative groups.

People don't belong to just one social group, however, but many. Moreover, the groups to which they claim an affiliation in some circumstances, are split into contrasting sub-groups in others. Positioning Theory, developed by Harre and van Langenhove (1999) amongst others, attends to ways people shift position in relation to different categories, and examines the causes and effects of them doing so. Self-categorisation theory (Turner et al, 1987), by contrast, focuses more on people's membership of those categories. Research along this line has looked into how the depiction of groups depends on the construction of stereotypes (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994), how such ascription is used as a form of social control (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995) and how people try and avoid such ascription (Widdicombe, 1998). Both these lines of inquiry trace their allegiance to Althusser's (1971) notion that 'subject positions' are 'interpellated', in other words, identity is established by the fact people are 'hailed' or recognized by others and they in turn accept (willingly or grudgingly) that recognition. The main import of Althusser's idea is that it means identity is something that is to be found in talk. People discursively construct and negotiate (adopt and/or contest) recognizable positions for themselves and for others, and these discursive positions have repercussions on what they do and how other people respond.

I end this chapter by considering Hall's (1996) conceptualization of identity as 'strategic and positional' and suggest an elaborated definition of 'strategic identity'.

2.2. Social theory and positioning

2.2.1 Bourdieu's habitus

Pierre Bourdieu's social theory is relational or systemic, which means that the individual person is positioned within, and forms part of, a network of social systems that Bourdieu calls 'fields'. As these fields shift as a result of the actions of the people who operate within them, so too these people are forced to adjust their knowledge and beliefs, although the extent and nature of that adjustment is constrained by historical and social conditioning. This kind of social and historical conditioning, and the potential it allows for change to occur in particular ways, refers to habitus. Given its clearest theoretical elaboration in *The Logic of Practice* (1990), and grounded in large-scale and complex social surveys ranging from the French education system (1977; 1988) to a study of popular taste (1984) to literature and the arts (1993) to television and journalism (1998), habitus is defined by Bourdieu as:

...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the produce of the organizing action of a conductor (1990, p.53).

To simplify, habitus is thus an individual's dispositions, that is, her values, attitudes and beliefs, which result from a history of accumulated experience, and which become 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history' (1990, p.56). Bourdieu's contention is that, because we anticipate future practices in the light of past experience, we give disproportionate weight to early experiences; thus, childhood experiences in the home and at school are likely to exert a strong constitutive factor in forming a 'durable' habitus that lasts through adulthood.

Habitus is a metaphor of position, but it is a position in time as much as it is in a social system. Formed by our past experiences, our habitus denotes our *predisposition* to generate particular new thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions in response to the specific historical and social conditions that we experience. Bourdieu claims that knowledge is constructed, not passively recorded, and it is constructed through practice, that is, direct experience in the social world, rather than through intellectual effort. Thus, as a teacher, I will be more likely to interpret and respond to new situations in my classroom according to my previous experiences, whether those experiences were first-hand or my observations of other teachers. Moreover, my natural inclination will be to respond in a way that is familiar to me, rather than to try and imagine a range of alternative responses that are outside of my repertoire of experience.

The problem with Bourdieu's theory of habitus is that social and cultural habits or dispositions are internalised to such an extent that changing them, or even gaining

some kind of critical introspection on them, seems well nigh possible. In Bourdieu's view:

The schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will.
(1988, p. 466)

Moreover, the will and consciousness are also replaced by habitus:

The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories, as it is to reflexive freedom of subjects 'without inertia' in rationalist theories.
(p. 56)

In other words, although individuals do change and change constantly, this is because the habitus is faced with ever-changing social environments that require new and different responses. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's negation of the role of consciousness or will in the individual is undoubtedly what has most troubled his critics.

2.2.2. Lemke's dynamic open systems

Jay Lemke's *Textual Politics* (1995) accepts Bourdieu's view of society as systemic or relational, but whereas Bourdieu has tended to concentrate on commonalities among people and the endurance of shared characteristics over time, Lemke is more concerned with explaining social change. In order to do so, he takes from the field of

theoretical physics the thermodynamic notion of 'dynamic open systems'. Social systems, such as human communities or discourse, can be compared to naturally occurring dynamic open systems, such as flames, in that all of these depend on continuous interaction with their environments for their survival. All systems exist in a hierarchy of subsystems and supersystems. Each of them has a 'special kind of survival problem; they need to get from their environments the matter, energy and information that keeps them going, but in getting these and using them to live, they degrade the quality of the environment they depend on' (p.162). This accounts for the dynamism, or in Bourdieu's term, 'spontaneity' of systems.

Within this thoroughly relational view of society, as with Bourdieu's social theory, Lemke describes the individual as merely part of a complex social network. Even more than Bourdieu, however, Lemke makes explicit his rejection of the notion of individual agency. 'The problem of the subject', as he sees it, is rooted in our desire for the moral comfort that traditional liberal discourse of human individuality provides. But this discourse is entirely cultural and ideological. Moreover, 'the classical modernist concept of the human individual is one that conflates a physical, biological notion of the individual human organism with a social cultural notion of the individual human person, the social actor, agent or persona.' (p.81) Both of these discourses are social constructions, but they are profoundly different:

We obtain the common sense notion of a human individual only by a complex process of conflation: mapping the socio-biographical person onto the physical-biological organism. This is accomplished by our cultural patterns of discourse, and the associated actional practices. Because the classical notion

of a human individual is constructed in this way, if we no longer make the traditional metaphysical presumption of a single 'real object' to which each of these discursive systems 'refers' or 'on which' it acts, there is no longer any reason to suppose that 'the individual' constructed by each of these systems of practices coincides with those constructed through the others. (1995, p.81)

In fact, neither the material nor the social subject can be described as 'absolute' individuals. An individual is definable as a material system 'by the construction for some analytical purpose of one of the many different possible boundaries that might enclose the system. It is not that there is a system *there* to be enclosed (p.84).' There are always processes that continue to transfer matter, energy and information across the boundary, and indeed these boundary crossings are essential to the existence of the system that is defined as an individual and 'what we call an 'individual' system is always and necessarily only a theory-defined subsystem of something greater.'

Personal identity, thus, is constructed by 'foregrounding certain patterns we make in our inner dialogue and feelings as we set them against the background of what we are taught to take as "outer" events' (p.89). Lemke allows that we feel we have a sense of self, that we do perceive, experience, and will, and that we have 'minds', feelings, perceptions and desires. However, these are constructions 'woven from the warp and woof of cultural semiotic resources' in accordance with learned patterns of our community.

What we are taught in our culture to call our own minds, our own subjective sense of experiencing and being, is a projection onto the complex, interactive, self-organising system of an organism-in-its-environment of a cultural model

of what it is to think of ourselves according to one community's view of being human. (p.89)

How is it then that while we are identified by others and identify ourselves as being a certain social type, we also regard ourselves as unique tokens of that type? Lemke explains that idiosyncracies in the way people do the same thing 'become signs of the person as unique individuals'. In addition, in our culture, Lemke adds, 'special significance is given to the identifiers each of us uses to identify ourselves, the features of our subject identity or "sense of self". These are in principle borrowings and specialisations from those used in identifications of/by others' (p.89).

To summarise, Bourdieu and Lemke have elaborated theories about individual identity that leave little or no room for agency, a concept which has connotations of free will and moral choice. Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone (1993) argue that Bourdieu does not adequately bridge the gap between the social and individual; it is undoubtedly this emphasis on the inescapable influence of the social world on the individual that has prompted such criticism. Nevertheless, one of the chief insights of these theorists is their attention to the position or relation of an individual to her context, and to the fact that changes in the position of one bring about changes in the other across a series of interconnected fields.

2.3. Identity and Social Roles

Bourdieu's methodology of conducting extensive surveys is aimed at ascertaining correspondences between, for example, class and individual predispositions, in what might be called a top-down approach. However, in order to investigate the individual

in society, or the relation between the individual and society, a phenomenological approach (Schutz, 1967) that prioritises the experience and viewpoint of the individual, has proven particularly influential. In this section, I shall examine the work of three, Goffman, Gee, and Mathews, and consider their relevance to identity as position.

2.3.1. Goffman's theatrical roles

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), social psychologist, Erving Goffman proposes that the notion of theatrical performance be used as a metaphor for social life, particularly as it occurs within the physical confines of an organisation, such as a university or school. From this perspective, he considers the way in which individuals in everyday work situations present themselves and their activity to others and how they attempt to manage the impression that others gain of them. Clearly, the major difference between Goffman and Bourdieu is the emphasis on a disjuncture between what might be seen as a private self and a social self. Goffman quotes Santayana who gives this poetic account of the difference between the private and the social self:

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation (Santayana, 1922; quoted in Goffman (1959, p. iv).

The image of a cuticle or shell brilliantly captures the notion that the social self, in other words, language, expression, appearance, mannerisms etc, is substantively different, yet at the same time, a living part of the inner, private self. The outer social self depends on the inner, private self for life, while the inner self depends on the outer for protection.

With his notion of theatrical performance, Goffman develops Santayana's concept of dual selves in examining how people manage their social roles. Goffman's point is that people are *calculating* about the impression they give to other people (where Bourdieu suggests that they are not). However skilled they are, however, they have no actual control over the impression that is received. In everyday social encounters, there is a 'working consensus' that the impression that one person intends is more or less the same as the impression the other person receives (Goffman, 1959, p.9).

However, if the interaction develops in such a way that serves to 'contradict, discredit or otherwise throw doubt upon this projection, [...] the interaction may itself come to a confused and embarrassed halt' (p.12).

Such notions of projected personae and of a working consensus between interlocutors have also been explored through the concept of 'face' by Scollon and Scollon (1981), whose studies of Athabaskan culture suggested that in some, perhaps all, cultures, maintaining appropriate social roles takes precedence over any other kinds of social behaviour. The Scollons found that certain kinds of social interaction are simply not possible if they imply a loss of face to one or other of two speakers. Goffman's research in locations that are closer to home, such as the crofter communities of the

Shetland Islands, suggests that the importance attributed to consensus, negotiation or face is more ubiquitous than might be supposed. His study of the Shetland Islanders also sheds light on the fact that these social projections are deliberate rather than involuntary reactions to a social situation. Goffman recounts how he observed one islander approaching the home of another and adopting a particular social demeanor just before entering the house. For Goffman, this incident highlights the gap between the private and the public selves, and is suggestive of the control that the individual may have in moving between the two.

2.3.2. Gee's identity kits

In the field of critical linguistics, 'discourse' is a concept that has been developed to bridge the gap between the social and individual, although, like 'identity' and 'culture', it is a term which is used in various different and sometimes overlapping ways. Fairclough (1992) notes that in linguistics, discourse has tended to refer to extended samples of speech or written text, as well as to different types of language used in specific situations, such as 'newspaper discourse' or 'classroom discourse', whereas in social theory, it tends to signify different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice. As Fairclough puts it, 'discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or 'constitute' them (1992, p.3). Accordingly, commentators who have adopted this view have tended to focus on the ways in which ideological discourses are created and how they serve to perpetuate the power and privilege of certain dominant social groups over others (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Kubota, 1998). The emphasis is on how certain social entities or relations are made to appear 'natural, neutral and beneficial' (Pennycook, 1994), which they are anything but. The thrust of such arguments has been to raise

awareness among educators about ideological forces that may be working to the detriment of students and to create conditions through their pedagogical practice that will instead empower them (e.g. Lankshear, 1996; Hasan and Williams, 1996; but cf Lukes, 1996).

Gee's (1996) work on discourse is somewhat different in this regard, since rather than adopt the strictly Marxist or Foucauldian focus on the workings of economic and historic forces on social groups or individuals that is prevalent in the former theorists, he follows Goffman in prioritising the experience of the individual living in a social world. Like Fairclough, Gee distinguishes between discourses, which refer to stretches of text, and Discourses (with a capital D), which refer to ways of speaking, acting, and thinking. This is how he defines them:

Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognise.

(1996, p.127)

The analogy with Goffman's theatre metaphor is very clear here. But whereas Goffman's concentration on social interaction and the need for a working consensus highlights the contingency and fragility of the performance, Gee's notion of an 'identity kit' suggests something more robust, something that is there for us to pick up and use. This again is very different from Bourdieu's notion of habitus. With habitus,

social roles, or discourses are embodied, in other words they become part of the person, indeed they become the person. Gee's 'identity kits', however, suggest that we can put on and take off our social identities at will. There are of course obvious limitations to this notion. If I want to adopt the social identity of a surgeon, for example, I can easily dress up in a theatre gown, cap and gloves so that I look the part, but I cannot imagine what kind of 'instructions' would enable me to talk like a surgeon, let alone operate on any patients, unless what is meant by instructions are the many years of study and practice that every bona fide surgeon has to undergo. However, Gee's concept is helpful in portraying the multiplicity of social roles or identities that each of us adopt (because we have to as much as because we want to) in our daily lives and the ease with which we switch from one to another.

Gee's Discourses are useful in another sense too since they suggest something that people can and do use to their benefit. Many theorists (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Said, 1979; 1994) have used the concept to argue that Discourses work only in the interests of the powerful, and hence to the detriment, or continued oppression of everybody else. Canagarajah (1999) makes the case in *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* that if English language learners are to avoid this kind of oppression, then they have to 'appropriate' the language and use it to call for concrete improvements in their economic and political situations. Appropriating discourses means appropriating the right to speak up about what is wrong with the way things are in the world and this means upsetting the status quo. What Gee says is perhaps not so different in essence, but rather than visualising Discourses in terms of global power politics, he sees them more at work at the level of the individual:

Discourses 'capture' people and use them to 'speak' throughout history; people 'capture' Discourses and use them to strategise and survive. (1996, p.149)

Gee's choice of words suggests some important insights. Firstly, the idea of capture adds to the idea of appropriation the notion that neither discourses nor people are easily held down. Without some force by the one doing the capturing, these things are apt to wriggle free and refuse to do the job that is required of them. Furthermore, Gee's use of 'strategise' echoes Lemke's idea of the political nature of social life, in other words, that people speak and act in ways that give them some kind of advantage, whether economic, political, or moral. However, the nuance that Gee lends to the idea is that people are very much agents of what they do, even though in planning their strategies, they have to take account of the position of all the other forces in play.

2.3.3 Mathews' supermarket identities

Gee's notion of discourses as 'identity kits' suggests, as we have seen, that individuals are quite free to choose the social identity that they want (provided they can master the instructions that come with the kit). Gordon Mathews is a cultural anthropologist whose work on social identity in America, Japan and China (1996; 2000) suggests by contrast that this freedom is limited by people's perceptions of social and institutional constraints.

Like Goffman and Gee, Mathews takes a phenomenological stance in viewing the individual's experience as the key to understanding different cultures. In *Global Culture/Individual Identity* (2000), he argues that, while it is true that identities are

culturally shaped, 'underlying these formulations, there is a universal basis of self, as both interdependent and independent, as a part of and apart from other selves'.

Mathews accepts the notion of habitus in that 'the self is made of past memories and future anticipation linked to an ever-shifting present' but in addition to that:

[...] selves tell themselves in an ongoing construction made of words; and selves live in a world of others ever present in mind, but that others cannot fully understand (2000, p.12).

Mathews proposes that the way in which culture shapes an individual's identity can be analysed on three levels of consciousness: at the deepest level, beyond the grasp of direct consciousness, is a 'taken-for-granted' level, shaped by our language and our social practices. A second level is what Mathews calls the *shikata ga nai* level from the Japanese expression meaning 'it can't be helped'. This refers to the social and institutional pressures and constraints of which an individual is conscious but yet cannot easily resist. Mathews claims that this level is more important than traditional analysts of culture have tended to recognise, and this does seem to be borne out by the people whose lives he portrays in this work. His Japanese artists, American religious seekers, and Hong Kong intellectuals are all examples of identities which we might imagine to be comparatively less bound by social convention. A third and relatively superficial level of cultural shaping involves 'the cultural supermarket' from which individuals feel themselves to be free to pick and choose the ideas that they want to live by. Although this notion of individual freedom seems natural to most of us, the cultural supermarket, Mathews suggests, is available only to the ten or fifteen percent of the world that lives in affluence (2000, pp.12-16).

What is appealing about Mathews' model is that it seeks to integrate two apparently unconnected situations: social determinism and individual freedom. From the perspective of the individual, living out the identities that one chooses is what gives life its meaning, and yet all the characters that Mathews portrays in his books feel that the societies they belong to somehow curtail their potential to develop these identities as they would ideally like. One of the people he writes about, for example, is a Japanese jazz musician, who believes that his ethnic identity will always preclude him from being a true jazz player, no matter how good his technical ability. Despite his personal investment in this identity, there is nevertheless the anxiety that he is not and could never be 'the real thing'. The jazz musician, along with everybody else, lives in a 'world of others ever present in mind' (p.12). Recalling Gee's idea of strategizing, Mathews' point is that most of our strategies are probably mostly defensive, resulting in constraint rather than action.

2.4. Representing Other and Self

2.4.1. Stereotypes and Orientalism

As Mathews' example illustrates, the basis of all social identity is representation: our representation of others, others' representations of us, and even more convolutedly, our representations of others' representations of us. Pickering gives us this definition:

Representations consist of words and images which stand in for various social groups and categories. They provide ways of describing and at the same time of regarding and thinking about these groups and categories. They may also affect

how members view themselves and experience the social world around them (Pickering, 2001, p.xiii).

Representations entail thinking in categories and this is how we unavoidably organise the world in our minds. Organising people in this way entails imposing order and stability on a society that might otherwise descend into chaos. Yet the politics of representation means that social groups and categories are defined in a political hierarchy which ensures that the advantages of some groups will be maintained at the expense and marginalisation of others. This unequal distribution of wealth and privilege is justified or naturalised by the way the social groups who have power represent themselves and the groups that do not have power. This is, roughly speaking, the crux of Said's (1979) *Orientalism*. Said's thesis is that orientalism was a new way of representing the countries that the West was in the process of colonising. Representing these countries and their people as exotic and maximally 'Other', the colonial powers rationalised to themselves a world order in which their own powerful position (the white man's burden) was twisted to appear magnanimous.

An interesting slant on this has been provided by Kubota (1998; 2002), who develops the idea that Orientalism is a form of global positioning that is apparent in ideologies in other parts of the world. Her focus is on Japan where she maintains that 'orientalist discourses' serve to justify a nationalist philosophy known as '*nihonjinron*', or Japanese uniqueness. Fixing on Japanese educational policy, Kubota argues that orientalism prevails even in the government's drive for *kokusaika* (internationalisation), which has influenced educational reform since the 1980s. Defined as '[an effort] to understand people and cultures in the international

communities through various social, cultural and educational opportunities

[*kokusaika*] also aims to transform social and institutional conventions to adapt to the international demands' (Kubota, 2002, p.16). Accordingly, measures have been taken to promote communicative English and to bring in more foreign teachers to assist Japanese language teachers in schools.

Despite the name, however, Kubota argues that *kokusaika*, in fact, is not true internationalisation. 'One notable aspect of *kokusaika*,' she says, 'is its preoccupation with Western nations, particularly the USA, and its promotion of nationalistic values in educational contexts (2002, p.16).' Ignoring the growing ethnic and cultural diversity within Japan itself, the sole aim of learning English is to be able to convey Japan's unique values and culture to other people in the world (particularly Americans). Rather than internationalisation, argues Kubota, this is the discourse of *nihonjinron*, a theory that celebrates the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the Japanese people. In her view, the effect of *kokusaika* for Japanese society is to 'balance a tension between the promotion of English and nationalism' (p.17).

Kubota's point is that Japan's preoccupation with the West and with English is a perpetuation of an essentialist, stereotyped view of itself and of the West, as well as a refusal to embrace the cultural pluralism that already exists in its own country, let alone elsewhere in the world. Her view is reflected in Pickering's assertion that 'stereotyping attempts to deny any flexible thinking with categories' (p.3). Certainly, *nihonjinron*, like any nationalist conservative ideology, denies heterogeneity that already exists and attempts to ward off any change that may further threaten the unity that it imagines. The exercise of power, however, whether in the creation of

institutions (Starr, 1992) or simply the management and organization of other people inevitably entails a loss of flexibility, a hardening of categories since without this, any social government is rendered impossible.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned Harklau's (1999) study which found that ESL students were unhappy about the way they were 'represented' or positioned by typical assignments which required them to write about 'their culture'. Many of these students had lived several years in the United States or another country and had little experience or memory of their 'home' culture. Thus, what started out as a well-intentioned attempt at student-centred pedagogy ended up being ineffective, and even counterproductive, because it was based on rigid representations of culturally different ESL students that were not reflected by the reality of students' identities in the classrooms.

Harklau's study offers a good illustration of the way representation of others, particularly when it is used in some form of social control such as education is often inflexible and simplistic in a way that can turn good intentions of teachers and other curriculum designers into instruments of discrimination and oppression. I now turn to ways in which representation is used to encapsulate self-identity.

2.4.2. Representation of Self

Stereotyping does not only occur in the representation of others, but, as social psychologists (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Haslam, Oakes & Turner, 1994) argue, is also prevalent in the way we represent ourselves. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1985) proposes that an

awareness of social identity is formed through comparison with other social groups, and through a search for and emphasis of differences from other social groups. Tajfel states that social comparison entails an awareness of social status. Usually, groups will assert some kind of superiority over other groups with whom they share a social space, whether that is economic, ideological or moral.

Sometimes people who belong to minority social groups are not content with that kind of compensation. Identity politics arises when a social group promotes its own distinctiveness as a reason for reversing a power imbalance (Grossberg, 1996; Rutherford, 1990). Identity politics focuses our attention on the salience of a single social identity, but in reality we all belong to a variety of different social groups for which we acquire a repertoire of social identities. In some situations (for example, at work), one social identity will be more salient than others. Sometimes, our social identity might be torn between two or more conflicting social groups. Most of the time, we emphasise or 'accentuate' (Haslam, Oakes & Turner, 1996) our affiliation with the group we believe it is most in our interests to belong to and in contrast with or opposition to another group.

One influential concept in this line of thinking is Membership Categorisation (Sacks, 1974; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Silverman, 1993). Sacks was the first to coin this term and, although he himself did not work out a detailed mode of analysis, offered an explanation of its significance in his well-known discussion of the utterance 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up' (Sacks, 1974). As Sacks points out, there are a number of points that we take for granted in order to understand this utterance. We understand, for instance, that 'the mommy' is the mother of the baby in

the first part of the utterance. We also understand that babies and mommies belong in a single category, namely the family, and that within that social group different members have certain expected roles; thus it follows logically that if the baby cries, the mother should pick it up. Finally, we understand that this child's narrative aims to 'interpellate' us, positioning us in a way so as to attract our attention to something that may be unusual and certainly ought to be of mutual relevance. To this extent, Sacks argues, this simple two-sentence utterance is intended and, provided we understand the intention, succeeds as a complete narrative. Thus, membership categorization devices are ways in which speakers position themselves and their listeners in relation to a particular social category or categories in which certain roles are supposed to be mutually intelligible and predictable.

The emphasis on categories serves to situate speakers in a social world in which people are grouped together according to their attributes, and more importantly to their roles. One shortcoming of this characterization is that it assumes a somewhat static view of the social world, one in which people's main motivation is to understand one another and achieve harmony. Ideal as this may sound, it misses the more dynamic, conflicted and political nature of social interaction that Lemke describes so compellingly. In the next section I turn to the work of Harre and van Langenhove (1999), which attempts to provide a more dynamic account of social identity.

2.5. Positioning Theory

The notion of positioning has been developed over the past decade by social psychologists, Rom Harre and Luk van Langenhove, and in their treatment the

emphasis is on 'fluid positionings not fixed roles' (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999, p.17). In contrast with the work on social categorisation described above, and also with Goffman or Gee, for whom roles are key social phenomena, this theory sees the act of positioning itself as crucial to understanding social interaction.

Harre and van Langenhove define position as 'a complex cluster of generic personal attributes structured in various ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignment of such rights, duties and obligations to an individual as are sustained by the cluster' (1999, p.1). To explain this, Harre and van Langenhove show how each speaker brings to a conversation a collection of personal or moral attributes. Speakers can position themselves or be positioned for example as powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, definitive or tentative and so on, and what they say will be interpreted in the light of recognized positions or roles. What distinguishes positioning theory from other phenomenological theories of identity is that the result of positioning, whether self-determined or imposed by others, is action or restraint. Moreover, as Harre and van Langenhove put it, 'the social force of an action and the position of the actor and interactors mutually determine one another'. Finally, social episodes are also governed by the history of actions and words that precedes them, what Harre and van Langehove term the 'storyline'.⁶

Davies and Harre (1999) claim that this model is of particular value in studying the emergence of 'personhood' in the dynamics of interaction between two or more

⁶ This account of positioning has much in common with Bourdieu's habitus, the main difference being Harre and van Langenhove's insistence that the positions we take are moral (and hence, by implication, agentive) acts, whereas Bourdieu leaves the impression that an individual's actions are more circumscribed.

people. They give an example of an episode in which two people, Sano and Enfermada, meet at a conference. Enfermada falls ill and Sano offers to help her:

It is a winter's day in a strange city and they are looking for a chemist's shop to try to buy some medicine for Enfermada. A subzero wind blows down the long street. Enfermada suggests they ask for directions rather than conducting a random search. Sano, as befits one in good health, and accompanied by Enfermada, darts into shops to make enquiries. After some time it becomes clear that there is no such shop in the neighbourhood and they agree to call a halt to their search. Sano then says 'I'm sorry to have dragged you all this way when you're not well.' His choice of words surprised Enfermada, who replies, 'You didn't drag me, I chose to come', occasioning some surprise in turn to Sano (Davies and Harre, 1999, p.45).

The two characters in this story give two rather different accounts of their understanding of the episode, and this leads to a quarrel between the two. Sano protests that he feels responsible for Enfermada's well-being, while she in return insists that his taking responsibility in this way placed her in a position of someone who has no responsibility. As a feminist, she feels that it only right that she make him aware of the way he appears to have positioned her as someone who has no agency. Sano for his part takes offense at her implication that his behaviour is sexist. But, as Davies and Harre observe, 'this only makes sense in his moral order of interpersonal obligations, not in the feminist moral order.' (ibid, p.46). As both are emotionally committed to the moral order that supports their original position, the exchange becomes heated.

The actions of Sano and Enfermada can be analysed up to a certain point using Positioning Theory. Sano asserts one position, which Enfermada rejects, parrying it with an alternative position in which she takes the moral high ground. The sequence of events that led to this exchange and the altercation that ensued is also understandable: as work colleagues at a conference there is an assumption of sexual equality. However, as Enfermada falls ill, the changed situation for Sano necessitates different moral obligations: that is, the obligation to take responsibility for a sick person. As Enfermada is the one who is positioned as incapable of taking responsibility for herself, it is understandable that her reaction might be to re-assert her equality. The storylines that both hold to have a social force in challenging the positions of the other. Each one reacts, in this case, with a show of defiance, making their respective moral positions more entrenched. They could have acted otherwise, for example, if one or other retreated from their original moral position and acknowledged the validity of the other's position.

The value of this analysis is that it focuses attention on the shifts of position that occur in social interaction. What it does not do, however, is attend to the 'moral orders' themselves and the rights, obligations and responsibilities that are enshrined within them. Davies and Harre argue that moral orders are 'immanent', in other words, they are present only in the moment of discursive realisation. In their opinion, they have no 'transcendental' or abstract existence, as pre-existing schemata or cognitive apparatuses upon which the protagonists can draw (pp.44-5).

The problem with this argument, however, is that it offers no explanation about how it is that different people have knowledge about moral orders, and aware of the kinds of rights and responsibilities are entailed within them. Of course, people might have their own individual moral codes, but they cannot expect others to be aware of what they entail. Sano and Enfermada, however, were both aware (presumably more or less) of what is entailed in each other's moral order. Sano, for example, was quite aware that he was being positioned within a feminist moral order as a sexist; if he were not, Enfermada's position would have no force.

Although Harre and van Langenhove reject the notion of categories or roles, some device seems necessary to explain moral orders that are widely understood, if not always accepted. On re-reading the Sano-Enfermada anecdote, we may find ourselves placing the characters in categories anyway, since this enhances our understanding of what is going on. It is not immediately apparent that Sano is a man, and Enfermada a woman (although maybe it would be if we were familiar with Japanese and Spanish names⁷). However, once we know this, and added to our knowledge that it is at a conference that the two have met, we are likely to deduce that Enfermada is the kind of woman who is likely to be a feminist. This is the kind of categorisation that makes the events in the anecdote appear all the more understandable and reasonable.

However, without that knowledge, the behaviour of the participants may seem rather baffling. In the same way, returning to Sacks' illustration of membership categorization, 'the baby cried, the mommy picked it up', the story he tells makes little sense unless one knows something about children and the social world which they inhabit, about their significant categories and the salient features and roles that

⁷ There is an additional twist to the fact that I automatically took Sano to be a Japanese, rather than a Latinate one, thus adding an element of cross-cultural (mis)understanding to my schema of this episode.

are attached to them. In other words, in order to understand and interpret social events, it is necessary to share or at least to be very familiar with the ‘emic’ conceptions of the participants, a concept that I shall discuss in detail in the following chapter.

2.6. Strategic positioning

The notion of identity as position that is adopted in this thesis, though close to Positioning Theory, in fact derives more from Hall’s account of identity (2000). Hall’s definition has much in common with Positioning Theory. Identity, according to Hall, is ‘strategic and positional’. Furthermore:

‘Identities are never unified, but in modern times are increasingly fragmented and fractured ... multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions ... subject to radical historicisation, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.’ (2000, p.17).

In contrast with Positioning Theory, however, Hall’s identity is not something that is constantly in flux, but is temporarily fixed or ‘sutured’ into place. Identity is ‘the point of suture between, on the one hand, discourses and practices which attempt to “interpellate”, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as objects which can be spoken (p.19)’. Unlike Positioning Theory according to which whether an individual positions herself or is positioned by others is seen as a moral matter, in Hall’s rendition, the constitution of a social identity is an

act of power, as is captured vividly in the suture metaphor. Hall cites Derrida to highlight this prevalence of power: 'Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles' (Laclau, 1990, p. 33, cited in Hall, 2000; p.18). The emphasis on power covers both morality and politics, since morality implies personal power or empowerment to act in the way one believes is right, that is, in the representation of self, while politics implies power over other people, including the representation of others, as in the formation of stereotypes.

As we saw with Positioning Theory, people speak and act in response to the ever-changing situations they find themselves in. Hall's term 'strategic' lends to this a stronger force of agency. People choose to speak and act in their own best interests (or what they perceive at the time to be their own best interests), if not always materially, then at least morally. Thus, if people find themselves positioned in a way that does not suit their best interests, they can choose to accept this, or leave the situation (if it is possible to find another where one's best interests are met), or struggle against it until others change their position.

Although strategic positioning is perhaps most obviously applied to ongoing social interaction in which participants are negotiating to establish their positions with each other, it can also be used to examine narrative. Many of the writers already discussed have signaled a central role for narrative in the formation of identity and in the construction of social interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Gee, 2001; Mathews, 1996; 2000). The moral philosopher MacIntyre states:

... man in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions [is] essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth (1981, p.201).

Truth, for MacIntyre, is necessarily relativistic, but his assertion that it is something that we aspire to again puts morality at the forefront of human experience. We recount our experiences to others and to ourselves in ways that we feel are right and true. However, narratives are not created in a vacuum. Storytelling, MacIntyre observes, assumes the presence of the listener as much as of the teller, and in many cases the context in which a story is told will have a greater influence on what is told and how than on the authentic experience of the narrator.

Other theorists have highlighted the fact that narrative is a construct or a fiction (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Novitz (1996) declares that 'our individual identities and ideals of personhood are constructs produced in much the same way that works of art are produced' (p.143) and, like works of art, 'are filled with political significance and open to political intrigue'. This is a metaphor which puts the individual person's originality and creativity in first place.

Hall (2000) too maintains that the fictionality of narration should not be seen as a weakness:

...The necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the 'suturing into the story' through which identities arise is, partly, in the

imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field.

The identities that we construct are effective if they enable us to get what we desire. To that extent, we are 'motivated storytellers' (Hermans, 1993). Novitz comments that 'stories about ourselves, in which we figure as central subjects, and to which others attend imaginatively, invite the sort of empathy we most desire' (1996, p.148). Hermans (1993) elaborates on this declaring that we are propelled by two particularly salient motives: firstly, a striving for self-enhancement or self-preservation, and secondly, a longing for contact or union with others. The identities that are constructed through self-representation are thus extremely fragile, as in Polkinghorne's definition:

The concept of self is [...] a construction built on other people's responses and attitudes toward a person and is subject to change as these responses, inherently variable and inconsistent, change in their character (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.150).

In the views expressed by Hermans and Polkinghorne, however, there is little room for ethics or morality, which implies a constancy of principles. Ricoeur (1992) addresses this tension between change and constancy by dividing the concept of identity into two parts: *idem* (Latin: same) which signifies the character by which a person can be identified, and which is social and contingent, and *ipse*, or selfhood, which contains notions of constancy, accountability and responsibility. Thus, in addition to being motivated to be 'true' to others, we are also motivated to be true to ourselves.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed a range of writers who deal with the notion of identity. In elaborating a definition of 'strategic identity', I have drawn on these writers as follows:

- From Bourdieu and Lemke, I view the individual as the product of historical experience and of position within a network of social 'fields'.
- A phenomenological approach, as is exemplified by Goffman, Gee and Mathews, prioritises the experiences of individuals. Identity is to be detected thus in what people say and do, and in particular, in their representation of themselves.
- In representing self and others, we create social categories, which are always selective or stereotypical. This can be used to justify social inequalities in society, as in the case of Orientalism, but such categorization can also be used in a more positive way as a rallying marker for members.
- Our association or membership of categories can be fairly flexible. Positioning Theory attends to the way we may shift our positions in our interactions with others as a way of establishing our identity in a moral landscape.
- Conceptualising identity as strategic positioning bridges the gap between social determinism and agentism. A focus on 'strategy' leads to a focus on

motives and to the way individual teachers regard particular situations as constraining or as offering potential for action and change.

Apart from Bourdieu, most of the authors discussed here are normally associated with a phenomenological approach to social research, that is, one that prioritises the individual's experience, and this is the stance that is adopted also in this thesis. In the next chapter, I shall discuss some of the implications of this approach for designing a methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCHING POSITION

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I defined identity as strategic positioning. As I have explained, we signal our identity, or strategic positioning, in our declared membership of or alignment with particular groups of communities, and our rejection of others. In this chapter, I describe and explain the rationale for a study involving Japanese and non-Japanese teachers at Japanese universities, which sought to address the questions surrounding professional and cultural identity that I raised in the introduction to this thesis; namely:

- Regarding teachers' professional identity, what are the positions that teachers adopt toward their career path: do they define themselves as professionals? How has their view of language teaching changed or developed over the course of their working lives?
- How do teachers position themselves in their current occupation? How do they position themselves with regard to students, colleagues or others who may be significant in their working lives? How do they position themselves with regard to the institution as a whole: as I showed in Chapter One, many researchers have stated that language teachers occupy a marginal position in universities. Does an analysis of teachers' positioning in their discourse bring to light any additional insight about this observation?

- How do language teachers position themselves with regard to their language identity, in other words, as native speakers, Japanese speakers of English, or some other more complex hybrid of the latter two? How does their language identity affect what and how they teach English to university students?

As I explained in the previous chapter, strategic positioning requires a phenomenological approach in research, since in order to discover why it is strategic, it is necessary to explore the values and beliefs, motives and desires of the person who is the subject of the research. Such subjective experiences can only be conveyed through talk. I thus join a growing number of social science researchers who believe that ‘narrative is both the phenomenon and the method of the social sciences’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.18; see also Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Potter, 1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Also, like Clandinin and Connelly, in this study my prime interest is in the specific person rather than in the universal case, which is antithetical to the notion of strategic positioning.

In this chapter, I describe a study conducted with a group of university teachers of English that was designed to elicit talk about career histories, current teaching practice and, more abstractly, beliefs and values about teaching. I also give an account of the decision-making process by which I moved from one understanding of the nature of the interview data and of my own role in the interview process and right to speak for the interviewees, to a different view. Moving onto the analysis, I consider how the notion of strategic positioning can be used as an analytical tool to examine questions about teachers’ professional and cultural identity in the conversations that were generated through this exercise. To illustrate this, I

conclude this chapter by working through an extract from a transcript of one of the interviews.

3.2. Seidman's research model

The original motivation for this study stemmed from a pilot study (Stewart, 1999) which looked at English teachers' attitudes towards teaching writing and whose findings suggested that teachers' practices were based on widely varying beliefs about teaching and language. My objective for the present study was to look more deeply into teachers' beliefs in a rigorous and systematic way that would enable comparisons to be made between individual teachers. I was interested in finding a research design that would permit a focus on both the past experiences of the teacher, as well as current experience, including both practices and the social context in which those practices are undertaken.

Seidman (1998) proposes one model which he and his students have used to generate narrative data of comparable quantity and content from a number of subjects engaged in a single occupation or profession. The purpose of this type of in-depth interviewing, Seidman explains, 'is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to 'evaluate' as the term is normally used [...]. At the root of interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.' (Seidman, 1998, p.3) In seeking to understand the work that teachers do, this method enables us to put their teaching practices and beliefs in the context of their own past educational experiences and of their current social and institutional context.

Although some in-depth, or life story, interview proponents favour more lengthy interviews to allow the participants to cover their story in the manner and depth that they wish (e.g. Atkinson, 1998; 2002), Seidman recommends a more rigid structure, limiting each interview to 90-minutes, and spacing the interviews every three to five days. In this study, all the participants were interviewed at intervals of two to seven days, with the exception of the final interview of three of the participants, which took place two or three weeks after the second interview, during which time I was out of the country.

The first interview was a life history in which the participant attended to the events and experiences that had led to her or his current position in her or his career.

Following Seidman's guidelines, the aim was to encourage the participant in the production of narrative, avoiding 'why' questions which would elicit analysis of their actions, and instead asking more 'how' questions which would prompt the participants to tell their stories.

The second interview concentrated on details of the teachers' work experience. The teachers were encouraged to describe the syllabi that they teach (since generally in Japanese universities the choice of syllabus, including the goals, teaching materials and evaluation, is left to the individual teacher), or to talk through a typical class. Teachers were also encouraged to discuss their relations with students and colleagues, and with other people with whom they interact in the university, and also professional relations they have outside their own institution.

Finally, a third interview is intended for the participants to reflect on the meaning of their own lives, where they look for patterns and themes that have become prominent in the course of their storytelling in the first two interviews. According to Seidman, this third interview 'can be productive only if the foundation for it has been established through the other two' (p.12). In the present study, it was in fact one of the participants who suggested that a fruitful way to approach this final interview would be to ask the interviewees themselves to write down themes that they thought had come out of the earlier interviews and that they wanted to develop with further narrative for the sake of completeness, or that they wanted to consider in a more analytical, reflective way.

The interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience, either in my office or theirs, or in some instances, on more neutral territory, such as coffee shops. All the interviews were taped, and a written summary was given to the participants prior to starting a new interview. The object of these summaries was to check for errors and misinterpretation, and in some cases, prompted further discussion in the subsequent interview. At the end of the process, I wrote to each participant asking for authorization to use the summaries and transcripts of the tapes. Two of the participants expressed some concern at the beginning of the interview process that I protect their anonymity, and I decided therefore to change the names of all the participants, of named colleagues and of the universities where they were employed at the time of the interviews.

3.3. Selection of participants

Eleven teachers took part in the study and eight of these (four Japanese, three Americans, and an Englishman) are selected for presentation and analysis in this thesis. The reason for cutting the original number was mainly in the interests of manageability and quality of data. With regard to manageability, eight participants generated transcripts amounting to over three hundred single-spaced pages. Unlike a quantitative approach to research, subjects of the study were not seen as representatives of any particular group or practice. Rather each teacher is regarded more as an individual case study, of interest for the unique experiences they relate and for the unique ways they have of relating them. In terms of quality, of the original eleven participants, two were excluded because the quality of the tapes was very poor, and because their length of experience teaching in Japan was shorter than the others, while one other was excluded because teaching in a Japanese university constituted only a small part of his teaching work.

In choosing teachers, some consideration was given to purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The aim was partly to achieve a balance in terms of cultural identity and gender, and partly to establish a data base that was of consistent technical and narrative quality. The teachers ranged in age from late 20s to mid-50s, and in length of experience teaching in Japan from three to 30 years. They also ranged considerably in the kind of teaching (content and methodology) they did.

As a teacher working in Japanese higher education myself, I started my search by asking fellow teachers who had impressed me as people who enjoyed teaching and enjoyed talking about it. In addition to my personal acquaintance with most of the participants, two other teachers were recommended to me by the initial participants,

who by then had some knowledge of the process of this research and the object of study. (Arksey & Knight, 1999; and Silverman, 1999, refer to this approach to participant selection as ‘snowballing’).

As discussed in Chapter One, much of the research literature into teacher knowledge and beliefs deals with novice teachers and their emerging beliefs as they learn from their experiences and as they adapt to specific school environments. The aim of this study was to examine more established teachers who were confident and successful in their job. Just what is meant by a ‘successful teacher’, however, is as difficult to pin down as ‘expert’, as we saw in Tsui’s (2003) selection of an expert teacher. Indeed, whereas expertise is something about which various other people can judge about a teacher, confidence and success are more subjective and more superficial. Depending on the interviewee, and depending on the nature of the interview, the personal revelations that emerge are as likely to undermine these attributes as they are to explain or enhance them.

Success, like expertise, can be measured in different ways. One way to measure it is to consider it in terms of career status, since there is a hierarchy of academic posts, and moreover, a hierarchy of academic institutions in Japan (as elsewhere). Career status is in fact something I address in Chapter Five. Other less tangible ways of measuring success might include student achievement or popularity among students (neither of which are recorded officially in Japanese higher education). It might include academic qualifications, publications or appearances (especially guest appearances) at conferences, although none of these reflect directly on how successful

a teacher is with students. Finally, success might be seen as a personal measure of satisfaction, pride and confidence in one's own teaching. I took all of these into account in my search for participants, but was most swayed by the latter, that is, by people who gave me and others the impression of being successful.

Needless to say, as the interview process unfolded, my initial impression of the teachers changed. In some cases, I began to question whether they were really as successful or as 'good' as I had originally imagined. In his recent work on 'the best college teachers', Bain (2004) states that in his search for outstanding teachers, he sometimes dropped participants whom he came to regard as less than excellent in the course of interviewing. In the case of my study, I was not willing to pass such judgment on my participants, but tried to remain open-minded and sympathetic to all of them, even where they recounted different practices and different values to my own. My intention, in any case, was not to find excellent teachers, but rather, teachers who are experienced and successful in their own estimation.

There is another caveat to be made regarding this approach to selecting teachers to interview. On the one hand, I wanted to obtain a range of different kinds of people, and thus, ensured that different categories were represented, for example, Japanese/non-Japanese, female/male, older/younger. On the other hand, no attempt was made to ensure that these categories reflected actual categories of teachers working in this kind of employment in Japan. Japanese Ministry of Education

(Monbusho) statistics⁸ do show the number of non-Japanese teachers (5,038 out of 150,563 full-time university teachers, 8,780 out of 137,568 part-time teachers) employed in higher education, but though it might be inferred that most of these are involved in language teaching, there is no breakdown of figures to prove this. Clearly, though, the split here of four Japanese and four non-Japanese is not representative of the distribution in terms of nationality in the higher education system. Neither is the equal gender split of four men and four women typical of higher education employment. Monbusho statistics for 2000 shows 13.5% of total university teachers are women. Rather than seeing individuals as representatives of a certain category of people, however, my aim in this study was to capture their unique lives in detail.

3.4. Phenomenological research

Although the interviews followed a general research framework specified by Seidman (1998), it was still necessary to question the nature of the data that was obtained.

Alasuutari (1995) distinguishes between treatment of data as factist or specimen. With the former, research subjects are seen as informants, and the information they provide is regarded as more or less representative or true of the topic being researched. The teachers in this study were regarded as truthful informants, although it was not the purpose of this research to test the veracity of what they said. If a teacher claimed to teach in a particular way, or to have done certain things in his or her life, then I took these to be at least relevant. Overall, however, I adopted a specimen approach to the data, treating it as the phenomenon that was to be studied.

A phenomenological approach to research derives from the ideas of philosophers such

⁸ Statistical information on Japanese higher education taken from Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture website: <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/xls/078.xls> (retrieved 29th March, 2005)

as Bergson and Husserl, and particularly through the work of sociologist, Alfred Schutz, about the importance of subjective experience and understanding. From anthropology, the terms 'emic' and 'etic' came to be used in social research to distinguish between the conceptual framework of those studied and the researcher's imposed frame of reference (Silverman, 1993). Strauss (1987, pp. 33-4) draws a similar distinction between 'sociological constructs', which are those of the researcher, and 'in vivo codes', meaning the categories that are used

by the subjects of research. More recently, however, researchers have questioned the need for such a dichotomy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

For many researchers (e.g. Mishler, 1986; Kvale, 1996), an understanding of the participant is something that emerges during the course of an interview. This would appear to be closer to the intentions of the Schutz (1967), who talks about the need to establish an 'idealisation', in other words, a picture of the subjective understanding that is possessed by the subjects of research. The purpose of interviews is thus to negotiate meaning, rather than simply to elicit and collect information. Mishler (1986), for example, defines the interview as 'a joint production of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other' (p.viii).

Kvale's definition (1996) is similar: 'the inter-view is an intersubjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest' (p.183) and he also states that for this reason it is more accurate (and more ethical) to consider an interview as something that is 'co-authored' rather than an account told by one person and collected by another.

This to some extent captures what I was trying to achieve in the interviews. In particular, I was anxious to ensure that I understood and did not misrepresent what my participants told me. During the interviews, much of my input consisted of requests for clarification, or occasionally reformulation. Additionally, as I have mentioned, after each interview, I wrote a summary of what had been said based on a replaying of the tapes.

However, in other ways these interviews do not conform to the 'intersubjective exercise' advocated by Kvale. Although, like Kvale, the more humanistic forms of research (e.g. phenomenology, feminism, ethnomethodology) emphasise the way the research endeavour is a process of self-discovery and potential empowerment for both the researcher as well as the interviewee, in most cases (including this one) the relationship between the researcher and the respondent is not an equal one, since it is the respondent's life rather than the researcher's that is supposed to provide the information that is relevant to the research. Although there was some variation among participants, in all of the interviews, the large majority of talk came from them.

In this respect, my interviewing strategy was similar to that advocated by Rosenthal (1998), in which the interviewee is asked to tell their 'family story and personal life history' in any way and in as much time as they please. The interviewer for her part does not speak at all during the interview, although she does use 'non-verbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention to encourage the narrative' (p.3). My own preference was for a more receptive style, which allowed the interviewee greater freedom to develop the narrative in ways that are most natural and most comfortable to them, as well as continuing and even enhancing the rapport between

interviewer and interviewee (see also Wengraf, 2001). Nevertheless, my style varied considerably from interviewee to interviewee, depending on the personality of the interviewee and the quality of rapport that existed between us. Some of the interviewees were able and willing to hold forth for long periods without the need for encouragement or prompting. Others had to be coaxed with more frequent and more directive questions. However, with none of the participants did I attempt to contradict or argue with anything that they had told me. My role, as I saw it, was to listen and understand, with occasional prompting or questioning. If my views differed from those of the participant, I did

not say so at the time. Throughout, I tried always to put myself in the participants' shoes, to see things as they themselves did.

3.5. Retelling stories: a false start

At the time I conducted these interviews in 2001, I believed that I would be able to work wholly within the phenomenological paradigm and succeed in representing an 'insider' understanding of the lives and work of the people involved. My attachment to this conviction was no doubt strengthened by the emotionally rewarding experience of sitting and listening intently to other people, all the while withholding my own judgment. Trying to form a view of how another person sees the world, moreover, inevitably involves what Schutz terms an 'idealisation', that is a representation, or picture of how I *imagine* that world view must be. Creating a 'picture' literally' is indeed the approach that is taken by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). The problem with this view, however, is that, however closely this representation is based on evidence, it is still *my* representation. Thus, the summaries that I wrote after each

interview, useful though they may have been for uncovering mistakes in hearing or understanding, introduce a whole range of changes to the original discourse, whether because that was the way I understood that discourse or because I was motivated by considerations of style.

Take for example the following comparison of transcribed speech from an interview with Jane:

[Interview 3, JS]

... there's feedback, either this could be from discussions or comments from the students, or it could be emotional feedback, I don't want to use the word gratitude but the feeling that you have done something useful. And I want to underline that it has nothing to do with the colonial attitude that I'm helping poor unfortunate refugees or probably at the military base, I'm not really helping unfortunate people. You understand what I mean? [*Mm...*] It has something to do with the fact that you are getting some kind of circular feedback, emotional satisfaction or satisfaction that students have understood something.

... and my summary of it:

She receives feedback from her students through discussion or comments. An emotional connection is made, even if what they give her cannot be described exactly as gratitude (and Jane is aware of the colonialist implications in what she is saying) she has the feeling that she has done something that helps them. In return, she has the emotional satisfaction of feeling that they have understood

what she was trying to do.

Although I have kept quite close to the original wording, there are subtle and even not so subtle transpositions of meaning and emphasis. There are two prominent shifts that I want to comment on here. The first is the insertion of the word ‘emotional connection’, and the logical inference I have made in which this connection consists of ‘feedback ... through discussion or comments’. In Jane’s discourse, ‘emotional feedback’ and ‘discussion or comments’ are presented as discrete actions, rather than both pertaining to the same category. This is a slight change, but it introduces an emphasis on emotional connection which was not present in Jane’s account.

The second shift is my rendition of Jane’s mention of ‘the colonial attitude’ and ‘poor unfortunate refugees.’ Jane’s tone here (and my perception of it) is ironic, but it is not as simple as that. ‘Poor unfortunate refugees’ is an odd choice of words, even for the purposes of irony, given the situation that Jane works at an elite university, and it is possibly to mitigate this that she appears to switch to a literal interpretation when she concedes that the people she teaches on the military base can hardly be described as ‘poor’ or ‘unfortunate’. I have toned down the complexity of what Jane says by glossing it as ‘she is aware of the colonialist implications’. But what are the colonialist implications? And are her implications the same as mine? What is absent from any of the transcripts or summaries is evidence of a conversation I once had with Jane a couple of years prior to this interview when we discussed Pennycook’s (1998) *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*. Certainly, Pennycook’s ideas are part of the implications in my mind, but are they in Jane’s? And indeed the implications that I have are far from explicit in my retelling of what she says.

From this, it becomes clear that the main difficulty with the phenomenological approach is that it presumes to give access to another person's worldview through the language that they use. However, as I have shown, my presumption that I truly understand it leads me also to presume to express that worldview in my own words. As these examples have shown, even discounting the possibility that I am simply a sloppy summariser, this is a difficult if not impossible exercise. The solution to this problem has been to change my thinking of language as a means through which I can gain access to another person's thinking, but instead to see language of the interviewee as the focus of the research inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Potter, 1998).

3.6. Researcher-participant positioning

This brings me to a consideration of researcher and participant positioning, that is the roles and relationships that were assumed by each during the course of these interviews. I have mentioned that the majority of the interviewees were acquaintances prior to this study. In most cases, the acquaintanceship was not so close that it hindered the formation of a new kind of relationship, that is, that of researcher and informant. In all cases but one, this new relationship or positioning generated a special rapport or trust between interviewer and interviewee (Arksey & Knight, 1999), or as Tannen (1990) calls it, a 'deep relationship'. In one case, an openness and frankness that I had encountered in previous conversations did not for some reason transfer to the interview situation. This reason, added to a poor quality of recording, led me to exclude this participant from the group of teachers in the study.

For the participants, their role was initially defined in a letter or email in which I explained the object of my research and invited them to participate (see Appendix I). Towards the end of or after the three-interview process, some of the participants (all of them women) started to comment on the roles. Two of them observed that the interviews had been ‘therapeutic’ for them; one of them, Harumi, had been slightly reticent at the beginning of the process, but gradually became more outspoken in the second and third interviews; another, Maiko, stated that the interviews had given her the opportunity to articulate what she felt about her career and helped clarify her thinking on what she should do next. A third teacher, Jane, joked that having someone listen to her stories made her feel ‘like a star’.

In addition to the positions that were constructed out of the research situation, as mentioned, most of the study participants already knew me as a fellow teacher, and this is thus also relevant to the nature of the interaction that ensued during the course of the interviews. At the time of the study, I had been teaching in Japanese universities for six years and was currently employed full-time at a private university in central Tokyo. As I have mentioned, I had worked part-time at three other universities and all but one of my participants were teachers I had met through work. As a colleague, or fellow teacher working in comparable institutions, I shared a good deal of contextual knowledge with my participants. The advantage of this was that rapport could be established more quickly, but a significant disadvantage was that it was perhaps more difficult to ‘bracket out the cultural’, or in other words, to objectify some of the assumptions that underlay the experiences or beliefs that teachers recounted to me.

My cultural identity is also a salient issue. Although there was only one other British person involved in the study, I felt that I had more in common with the expatriate teachers in general than with the Japanese teachers (despite a childhood experience of living for some years in Australia which I shared with one of the Japanese teachers).

In this study, all the interviews were conducted in English, although one of the Japanese teachers was considerably less fluent than the others and this raises the question of linguistic parity. Would it have been better to interview that teacher in Japanese and translate the transcript later? In fact, as I shall show, the extracts that are taken from that teacher's transcript appear to be no less suitable for the application of a narrative analysis that seeks to identify salient membership categories.

As I have already mentioned, gender and age may also have played a role in influencing both the development of rapport and the stance the participants took towards me. Two of the male participants, for example, devoted considerable time to talking about the importance to them of their wives or female mentors in their professional lives. Although I do not doubt the veracity of their claims, would the same assertions have been made if the interviewer had been a man?

More than any other aspect of my identity, however, for many of the participants it was clear that my identity as a researcher inquiring into teacher identity was of considerable importance in affecting the way these teachers talked about their lives and work, and indeed the way they talked generally. Each of these interviews was clearly that, an interview. Although my own impression was that these events took place in a relaxed and open atmosphere, these were not conversations (cf Kvale, 1996); questions almost invariably were asked by me, and the topic was almost

always about them and not me. Although a sympathetic listener (I hope), there was always the sense that this was a research exercise and that everything said was recorded. This inevitably affects the way the teachers presented themselves, as I shall show in later chapters.

3.7. Representing narrative

There are various conventions of interview transcription, all dependent on the goal of the research. Ethnomethodological approaches such as Conversation Analysis usually favour a detailed transcription aiming to reflect non-linguistic features such as pauses and intonation, as well as linguistic features such as pronunciation, or unintended slips or repairs by the speaker (Silverman, 1993, although cf Cook, 1990 for a discussion of what can't be captured in data transcription). In this study, the research goal is to identify occurrences of position-taking, either rhetorical, that is, explicit in the advancing of argument or counterargument, or embedded, a positioning that is implied in the use of certain vocabulary, affiliation with certain ideas or communities. In practice, as will be shown, this is a distinction that is not always so clear-cut. Nevertheless, the goal of analysing rhetorical strategy, and discoursal features such as metaphor or lexical features suggests that the transcript of what was said does not need to contain such fine detail.

Although I do not go as far as Atkinson (1998; 2002) in suggesting that narratives should be 'cleaned up' to do justice to the narrator's story, I have edited the interview transcripts in this study by introducing punctuation, particularly breaking long narratives into sentences for the sake of readability. Some discourse analysts (e.g. Gee, 2001; Kearney, 2003) have argued that narrative reveals the speaker's identity

not only in what is said but also in how it is said. Both Gee and Kearney have noted that the African-American and Caribbean narrators they studied tended to speak in ways that were highly rhythmic and they chose to represent this by arranging the narrative in poetic stanzas. Although in the present study there were pauses and rhythms that may have been characteristic of a particular speaker or that highlighted the emotional force of a narrative, I have chosen to retain a less marked prose format. I have recorded pauses as ellipses, but unlike some analysts (e.g. Riessman, 1993), I do not indicate exactly how long the pauses are. I have tended to avoid slips and repairs or other non-linguistic features, except where they are important to the meaning or flow of the narrative, such as hesitation or exclamation or laughter. I have not attempted to distinguish in any way the different accents, although I have left the grammatical anomalies unchanged.

3.8 Analysing position

Exploring language teacher identity by analyzing position is not without precedent. A recent study by Pavlenko (2003) also employs a methodology derived from Positioning Theory (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). Pavlenko's study examines the ways a group of language teachers on a professional development course viewed themselves as members of imagined communities of native speakers, non-native speakers or multicompetent speakers (Cook, 1999), as was revealed in essays that the teachers wrote on completion of the course. In analyzing her data, Pavlenko focuses on two sets of linguistic means: firstly, the lexical choices teachers make in describing themselves as members of particular groups, and secondly, changes in tense and aspect of 'change-of-state' verbs. Such verb changes, Pavlenko states, signal apparent changes in linguistic and social membership (Pavlenko, 2003, p.255).

Like Pavlenko, I have focused on the lexical choices that teachers make in positioning themselves as members of a particular group (although unlike her, I do not attend to verb changes). The interview transcripts are treated as texts which provide data for analyzing teacher identity with regard to the three question areas indicated in Chapter One, namely, career histories, professional relations, and linguistic/cultural identity. The first step in analysis was to go through each of the interview transcripts and identify all instances where the speaker addressed any of the subject areas. This is not the same as coding, however. The object of coding is to lift content from its original context and place it in categories that have been created for the research purpose. In traditional research methodology, the search is for similarities between discrete phenomena, whereas in researching positioning, it is taken for granted that each instance of positioning is dependent on the context in which it occurs, and it cannot therefore be extracted or removed from that context. The aim was to find instances of self-positioning around a particular role or concept (such as a career or profession) which provided insights into the motives for the self-positioning as well as into the role or concept itself.

Positioning, needless to say, implies relationality: any position that we are in has to be defined in opposition or by contrast with someone or something else. But positioning is more than just rhetorical one-upmanship (though often it is that too). Being on the side of right means aligning oneself with appropriate behaviour that is consistent with one's role or status within a particular group or community, not merely an appropriate one-off action. Defining identity as strategic positioning, as I have done in Chapter Two, means that the focus of analysis is on the ways people show themselves to be

‘good people’, in other words, in the accounts we give of ourselves and of what we do or have done, we show ourselves to be reasonable and understandable.

Let me demonstrate this by analyzing another extract from Jane’s interviews, this time a narrative about a conflict over a student’s grade. The boundaries of the narrative are defined here by the question which prompted it, and the evaluative comment, or coda (Labov, cited in Wengraf, 2001) that preceded a change of direction in the conversation.

3.8.1. Jane’s story: a disputed grade

Jane (3) pp. 15-16

What makes good teaching for me? Um ... the fact that you have a social element ... a social support ... I’ll give you another example ... Last year, a student came to me and said ... well actually first I got a letter from the ombudsman that works between the students and the department that said Miss So-and-so says that she got the wrong grade ... Now ... I had that student three semesters before.

Aha, aha.

There is a period of time ... I think it’s three months ... the students can come and they can get redress over a mark that was not correct ... so ... that was three semesters ago ... unfortunately what I had done was I had cleaned out all my old junk and that included the grade sheets from three semesters ago because I figured ... nobody came ... so I might as well throw it out ... But I remembered that student

and she got 83 where most students got 90 and I had remembered that she had not come to class a lot ... and there was a system where you lost points for not attending ... kind of a reverse merit thing ... more than three classes missed you got points taken away ... So this student actually did get 83 but I didn't have the attendance sheet or grade sheet ... The student had had her two exams returned to her, the students were told they should keep their exams ... Now the way the system works at [University name omitted] is that students supposedly don't know their exact grade ... OK ... they get a letter grade like A, B, or C ... However, this student knew she got 83 because she got her exams back ... After their sophomore year the students finally find out what that letter grade means in terms of an actual numerical equivalent ... And they need a certain number of points ... if they want to go to medical school they have to have a certain number of points.

Right, right

Obviously the student wanted to go to law school ... she was missing some points ... and she wanted her points up and she was going round asking other professors and asking them, 'could you lift the grade up?' and I said 'No, I can't change the grade; that's what she got'. It was too late, and she got the exam papers back. And she said, 'Well I only got one exam paper back'. And I said, "Well if that's the case, you know, how would you know what your grade was? You wouldn't have known you got such-and-such on the exam". Anyway ... in other words everybody knew. In fact the boss knew that there was something ... but she threatened to sue the university ... And this went all the way up to the dean .. But I just refused to do it ... Now probably Bob and other people who've been here

longer than me, they said, “Why didn’t you just sign it and get her out? You would have avoided problems” ... Now my boss doesn’t speak to me ... the chairman ... Of course, he’ll be out next year so that’s OK ... But it was this lack of support ... I think had it been at the girls’ college, they would have supported the faculty member a lot more. But this was again I had the feeling that ‘Oh, the foreigner botched up, and we’re going to support the student’. It was, I almost had a nervous breakdown. It wasn’t because I felt that I might have made a mistake. It was because the support was not there when the crunch came.

3.8.2. Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

Within this narrative, Jane adopts a number of positions all of which have a bearing on the kind of teacher she is. Clandinin and Connelly have written about a ‘three-dimensional narrative inquiry space’, in which the researcher must look ‘inward, outward, backward, forward and situated within place’ (2000, p. 49) in order to make sense of the stories that are

told. However, taking such a multi-directional focus presents a problem of presentation and validity.

To begin with, it becomes extremely cumbersome, if not impossible, to provide proof of meaning. I identified Jane’s story of the disputed grade as a narrative according to standard criteria in narrative research, namely, the prompt, the story, and the evaluative comment or coda (Wengraf, 2001). However, as Clandinin and Connelly suggest, and as I have indicated earlier in this chapter in my discussion of the problem of re-telling stories, the meanings of the narrative may extend far beyond the

boundaries of the extract. For example, just as Bakhtin (1981) writes that no utterances occur in a vacuum, and that all speech acts are coloured with voices or ideas (heteroglossia) that are present in the historical context, Jane's words in this narrative are given additional meaning by their relationship (similarity, parallel, echo, contrast etc) to previous things she has said. In a previous interview, Jane had related a very similar story where, as a young exchange teacher at a gymnasium high school in Austria, she had been forced to change a grade for the daughter of a friend of the school principal. She makes no allusion to that event in this narrative, but its significance cannot be discounted. Of course, it would be possible to draw attention to all such instances by citing from the transcripts, or directing readers to read the transcripts themselves and draw their own conclusions. But even then, the range of meanings evident to a subsequent reader will not be the same as those that were understood by the researcher during the interviews. Moreover, some understandings derive from experience not recorded in the research, as was shown in my discussion of the problems of summarizing the interviews.

The compromise that I have adopted is to present quite lengthy stretches of monologue (or dialogue) for two reasons: Firstly, I intend to capture entire narratives where possible, since it is in the social and historical context that is brought to life by the story that the teacher's own position, both social and moral, is likely to be apparent. Secondly, strategic positions are most evident when they undergo a change. However, although this may be illustrated in short extracts, very often without sufficient context the significance of the changes in position can be hard to understand.

3.8.3. Analysing Jane's positioning

In addition to the positions that are created between speaker and listener, Jane constructs a position for herself in a social world that is described in the story. In fact, the point of her story is that expected positions are dislodged, and Jane is left without any of the support that she would have expected in normal circumstances.

To understand what is going on here, it is useful to turn again to the notion of membership categorization devices that was introduced by Sacks (1974) and developed by others (e.g. Edwards, 1998; Oakes, Haslam & Turner; 1994; Silverman, 1993.) Sacks' baby narrative, 'the baby cried, the mommy picked it up,' cited in Chapter 2, succeeds as a story if, and only if, it is understood that the protagonists are members of certain social categories of which certain kinds of behaviour are expected, and that the event itself is worthy of attention in the eyes of the narrator.

Applying the same principles to Jane's narrative, there are a number of social categories mentioned, all of which assume certain roles or certain kinds of behaviour by their members. As I have mentioned, Jane is very explicit regarding what constitutes normal behaviour. Students are allowed to challenge a grade within a certain period of time after completing a course, hence teachers are expected to keep records of grades during that period. Since the student failed to make her complaint in that time, Jane was fully entitled to throw away the course records. The assumption about expected behaviour of the faculty, her boss and the dean is less obvious, but nonetheless implied: they should have supported her. The observations that 'everybody knew', that other professors knew that the student was simply trying to

force her grades up, and that the faculty would have supported a teacher at another university where Jane works part-time, are all part of her case that normal standards and ethics are turned on their head at this university, and good teaching here is impossible.

The community in which Jane positions herself in this narrative is one with a fixed and hierarchical structure: Jane cites the letter from the ombudsman who refers to the student as 'Miss So-and-so'. Jane herself, however, consistently refers to the young woman as 'this student', in opposition to her own identity as 'a professor in the department'. Furthermore, Jane's own position in the organisational structure is subordinate to her 'boss', whom she later clarifies is the chairman of the department.

Within this community, the expected roles are made very clear. Jane prepares the ground thoroughly in this narrative by a detailed description of 'the way the system works' at her university regarding grading procedures including the regular avenue students can follow to challenge grades. Having explained the rules so clearly, Jane's own course of action, throwing away the students' old grade sheets, seems entirely reasonable, while the student's behaviour, threatening to sue the university, is made to appear very unreasonable. The grounds that the student has for complaint, the fact that she had an exam which was marked 83%, is mentioned, but undermined by evidence of the student's untrustworthiness, such as lack of attendance and apparent lies about marks she had been given for other essays.

At this point, however ('but I just refused to do it'), Jane begins to switch her affiliations. Suddenly the salient membership category is not the English Department

which consists of both Japanese and non-Japanese teachers. Instead, she moves implicitly to align herself with a group which includes only ex-pats ('Now probably Bob and other people who've been here longer than me, they said, "Why didn't you just sign it and get her out? You would have avoided problems."') Although she does not say so explicitly, it is likely that category of 'other people who've been here longer than me' is limited only to non-Japanese teachers whose employment is generally of a shorter tenure than Japanese faculty.

Over the next few lines, the social category with which she affiliates herself is ambiguous, an ambiguity that Jane uses to her advantage in strengthening her moral position. The fact that the boss no longer speaks to her is interpreted as a kind of ostracism, but she does not make it clear whether that exclusion is imposed against her because she had acted improperly, by allowing an incident over a disputed grade to escalate to the extent where the student threatened to sue the university, or whether it is merely a logical extension of a more pervasive discrimination against her as a foreigner. In the next two statements, however, she makes it very clear which she believes it is. Firstly, she contrasts her department's actions with what she imagines would have been the case at another institution where she teaches part-time: ('I think had it been at the girls' college, they would have supported the faculty member a lot more.') In fact, Jane is not a faculty member at that institution, and her presumption that they would support the 'faculty member' is purely hypothetical. Her point in saying it, however, is to evoke the sense of a teaching community which would offer solidarity to its members. And this gives added weight to the contrast she presents in the following utterance: 'But this was again I had the feeling that 'Oh, the foreigner botched up, and we're going to support the student'.

In terms of membership categories, this sentence can be regarded as the most important in the narrative, as it signals the clearest contrast between the two social groups. One group is the academic community consisting of Japanese and non-Japanese faculty which stands in opposition to the category of students. The other is the national community of Japanese, which has as its polar opposite a social category of foreigners in Japan. Throughout the narrative, Jane has established her position as a *bona fide* member of a teaching community, on a par with other professors and carrying out her duties towards her students properly and professionally. However, the point of her story is to show that, at least at the university where she is employed, the other membership category, namely, 'we (Japanese)' and their polar opposite, 'foreigners' actually carries more weight. At the point of this switching of categories, the whole narrative, in which she has taken pains to establish her moral and professional probity, is cast in a new light: 'the foreigner botched up'. But there is no accompanying narrative to support this position. Jane's words are imbued with irony at the expense of the Japanese teaching community, which she believes has taken this stand against her. Moreover, she presents this not as one isolated event of lack of support for the foreign teacher, but as a repeated occurrence ('*again* I had the feeling') which raises her narrative to the level of generalisation, a universal truth.

3.8.4. Strategic positioning

Having examined Jane's self-positioning in a social order, which she represents through her narrative, I can now turn to the question of strategy: what are the motives behind these positions? Does Jane accrue any benefit from positioning herself in this way?

From the point of view of discursive positioning (i.e. positioning vis-à-vis the interviewer within the context of the ongoing talk), the benefit is perhaps more apparent. Having established that I am a sympathetic listener, and assuming that I share her moral indignation that an academic department should be so unsupportive of a member of its staff, Jane feels justified in her actions. Even though none of her colleagues approved of her intransigence, my sympathy perhaps strengthens her belief that she has at least won a moral victory.

From the point of view of rhetorical positioning (i.e. Jane's construction of social categories and her self-positioning in relation to them), Jane sets up expectations of certain kinds of behaviour from certain groups of people. Whereas she has acted according to the rules of the institution, and to the rules of the class, the student is shown to have acted unreasonably, and the members of her department, including her usually supportive foreign colleague, are also unreasonable in their failure to accept her word over that of a student. Although she has a moral victory, there is considerable damage to Jane's status within the university. As a result of this and other incidents that she relates over the course of the three interviews, Jane confirms her marginalisation in an institution that is represented as lacking in moral principle. This marginalisation may be actual, but in demonizing the university in this way, Jane justifies her growing tendency to give less of her time and energy to her classes and colleagues, and to expect less of them in return, as I shall show in later chapters.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the methods used to generate and collect, and

subsequently, analyse a body of narrative data. The main points covered in this chapter are as follows:

- Seidman (1998) provides a model of phenomenological research, which was adopted in a study of Japanese and non-Japanese teachers because it provides a framework for collecting data of comparable quantity and content.
- Since the aim of the interviews was to enable the teachers to narrate their experiences of work, I attempted to keep my own role in the interviews to a minimum. Nevertheless, the interviewer and the interviews themselves inevitably influence the nature and direction of the interviews, which must be accounted for.
- Problems of representing meaning were illustrated by (1) my re-telling of a teacher's story, and (2) an analysis of the various positions that were adopted in another story by the same teacher. Although the first method was rejected, problems of validity in the analytical method that was ultimately adopted are acknowledged but cannot be erased.
- An example of the analysis of the discursive and rhetorical positioning a teacher adopts when narrating a painful experience at work reveals the extent to which professional and cultural identity is negotiated through a series of moral choices that we make in difficult situations. As I shall show in the chapters that follow, strategic positioning around various aspects of professional and cultural identity is at the forefront of every teacher's story.

From the aspect of theory, I now turn to an empirical study of university teachers in which the concept of position is applied as a way of investigating identity and pedagogy. I begin in the following chapter by positioning the study itself: describing the social and institutional context shared by all eight teachers and summarizing the stories that they recounted over the course of the three interviews. Against this backdrop, I go on to a detailed analysis of the various positions that are adopted by the teachers regarding their career affiliation (Chapter Five), institutional status (Chapter Six) and language identity (Chapter Seven).

CHAPTER FOUR

ENGLISH TEACHERS IN JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1. Introduction

Having established a theoretical and methodological framework for examining teacher identity, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a descriptive account of the context in which this study was conducted and of the people who took part. Since position is central to the concept of identity that is employed in this thesis, it is essential as a first step to locate the teachers who took part in the study in their historical and social context.

Although it is often perceived stereotypically as a highly conservative society, Japan is, like any other country, in a continual state of transformation and development. The situation of higher education at the time when this study was conducted is not exactly the same as the situation today, and it is worthwhile elaborating some of the political and social issues affecting universities that have been resolved or forgotten some four years later. This is a study of people rather than of a place, but in order to make sense of some of the positions that we shall see in the teachers' narratives, it is helpful to look at the conditions in which they were working and the issues that they faced.

In the previous chapter, I explained that the summaries that I had written after each interview could not be regarded as data. In the three chapters that follow this, I shall be using the interview transcripts to analyse the positions that teachers adopt when they talk about their professional and cultural identity at work, but before embarking on this, I offer here short accounts of each teacher's career history and current teaching

practice, edited down from the summaries which were approved by the teachers themselves. The reason for doing so is to provide an overview, or rather, a view from outside, before moving in to the narratives to examine the teachers' positions and their implications. These brief portraits of the teachers also provide grounds for arguing that, instead of a single professional category, it may be more helpful to view the teachers as belonging to three distinct categories.

4.2. Higher Education in Japan

4.2.1. An Empire of Schools

The importance of higher education in Japanese society has been widely noted among sociologists (e.g. Cummings, Amano & Kitamura, 1979; Amano, 1990; Wadden, 1993; Rohlen & LeTendre, 1996). One eminent Japanese sociologist notes that 'society in general regards educational background as one of the most important yardsticks of ability and social significance, and there is little regard for what a man has done outside school education' (Nakane, 1998, p.111). Whilst there is a fundamental divide between people who go to university and those who do not, there is also a strict ranking between graduates of different universities.

Japan boasts a total of 702 universities, of which 100 are national, 526 private and 76 local⁹. At the top of the university hierarchy is the University of Tokyo, the first higher education school founded originally in 1868 as the Imperial University.

Traditionally, graduates from the University of Tokyo (Todai) form the 'establishment', entering the civil service for a career in bureaucracy in the ministries. Behind Todai come two huge private universities, Waseda and Keio, also founded in

⁹ Statistical information on Japanese higher education taken from Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture website: <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/xls/078.xls> (retrieved 29th March, 2005)

the second half of the nineteenth century, and retaining a reputation formed from the outset as a liberal or even progressive counterpart to the national university. Many of the graduates of these universities go on to become prominent figures in the media and political life. Below these schools come a number of the national universities around the country, and private schools located primarily in Tokyo, and down to smaller private universities, many of which are now struggling to survive in Japan's more than decade-long recession and with the declining population. The importance of the rank of the university to a graduate cannot be underestimated. As Nakane observes, 'the rank of university from which he has graduated more or less determines the range of an individual's activities, the accessibility of certain levels of status and the degree of success he may expect for the rest of his life' (1998, p. 113). Indeed, one western observer has titled his very critical study of the Japanese higher education as an 'empire of schools' (Cutts, 1997).

4.2.2. The rise and fall of Japanese higher education

Despite the continuing importance of the higher education system to Japanese society, this is a sector that has come under increasing attack by critics at home and abroad. In part, its rise and fall is directly linked to the country's economic fortunes. As long as Japan was thriving, its social organization and education system were regarded as the bases for its success and held up as ideals for the rest of the world to emulate (Nakata & Mosk, 1987). Once the economic bubble burst, these same characteristics were deemed to be the root causes of its downfall.

A late starter compared with other developed nations, Japan opened its first universities only in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a major part of its

strategy to end centuries of isolation from the world and to master the technologies that would enable it to compete in equal terms with the world powers of the time. Along with industrialization, Japan imported wholesale western systems in areas such as medicine and education to replace the homegrown practices that had evolved over centuries. As the liberal Meiji Era gave way to a militaristic and repressive Shinto regime and Japan started carving out territory for itself in Korea and China, Japan was now competing in the geopolitical arena with the other major world powers, and to that extent, its policy of catching up with the West appeared to have borne fruit.

After Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, the U.S. occupation (1945-52) put in place the legal framework and social structures that would underpin a new pacific state. education was remodeled along American lines: compulsory schooling of six years elementary and three junior high school, three years high school, then four years university, or two years junior college or vocational schooling (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994). As with the U.S., and in contrast to the British higher education system, the purpose of university was to provide a broad liberal arts education, rather than a narrow specialization. In addition, Japan adopted the American system of ranking of staff in higher education from lecturer up to professor among teachers, then management positions of dean and above that, president.

One of the effects of the war was the decimation of the population of academics of fighting age (Cutts, 1997). After the war, university departments found themselves staffed by older professors and by much younger academics, with a gap in-between. This may explain the emergence of an academic career system characterized by patronage and cliques, over individual scholarship and merit. Other observers,

however, claim that this is characteristic of Japanese society as a whole. According to Kelly and Adachi (1993), for example, the standards for Japanese behaviour in general are set by an idealised image of the family, an image that is constantly nurtured by the mass media. The widely accepted ideals of individual behaviour - for example, the importance of role over self, cooperation over competition and rank over merit - stem from this idealised image of the family.

This same discourse informs the basic institutions of Japanese society, including colleges and universities, which tend to characterise themselves as large families. Although it perceives itself as one large family, a Japanese university is composed of increasingly smaller sub-units, or cliques, known as *habatsu*. Comprising long-term relationships between faculty members, these cliques are, in the opinion of Kelly and Adachi, 'the building blocks of university politics' (1993, p.158). There are two kinds of cliques: *Gakubatsu*, by far the most prevalent, comprise close family-like networks of people who graduated from the same school under the same graduate or postgraduate supervisor. Another type is the *gakkai*, a network of scholarly communities working in a particular field. In both cases, the cliques are headed by a single senior member who wields a significant amount of power and influence. Younger academics, from postgraduates up, will often seek to attach themselves to a clique, knowing that the patronage of the clique will be of vital benefit to their future careers.

The prominence of cliques has also been noted by Cutts (1997) in his critique of Japanese academia. In his view, the clique system has led to a gradual but inevitable degradation of the quality and integrity of academic life in the universities of this

country. Cutts believes that this state of affairs is the result of a tendency for the clique head to admit junior members who are less competent as scholars, and hence present no threat to his (the female personal pronoun does not apply here) authority as head. Tenure is given immediately, as the Japanese higher education system does not have anything equivalent to the 'tenure track' system.

The situation that is described here, however, shows signs of changing both as a result of grassroots influence and directives from above. At the grassroots level, there were traditionally always exceptions to the cliques, known as *ronin*, or leaderless samurai, who do not belong, and indeed do not want to belong to the cliques (Kelly & Adachi, 1993). Cast in a pejorative light, *ronin* in Japanese culture are often represented as catalysts of change which may be beneficial, but which at the same time inevitably disrupt social harmony. Kelly and Adachi argue that in recent years, *ronin* teachers, who have usually been appointed on the basis of their expertise rather than their connections, have come to play an increasingly important role, as mediators between faculty and foreign teachers, as well as innovators and implementers of more progressive curricula.

In addition, there are major structural changes in the higher education system. Since April 2004, the national universities have become financially accountable, raising alarm that this will fuel competition between universities, leading to bankruptcies in an already overcrowded market. The private universities have been affected by similar changes, no longer receiving the substantial financial subsidies they had enjoyed in the past. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (Monbusho) has taken measures to oversee the activities of universities. Funding for

research projects has become more centralized, forcing academics now to propose and carry out research objectives, where in the past they had received money as a matter of course. Various other measures to evaluate teachers and their syllabi are under consideration, creating an atmosphere of anxious uncertainty in the universities and colleges around the country.

4.2.3. Foreign teachers in Japanese higher education

Foreign teachers, the large majority of whom are language teachers, account for only a very small proportion of the total number of teachers in Japanese higher education. Out of a total of 156,155 full-time teachers recorded in 2004, less than 3% (5,403) were non-Japanese. The proportion of foreign teachers working part-time, however, was more than double (10,554 non-Japanese out of a total of 154,670), indicating that overall foreign teachers occupy a marginal position in the higher education system.

As I mentioned earlier, foreign academics held a privileged position in the early days of Japanese higher education, since they were regarded as the bearers of knowledge and skills that Japanese needed in order to modernize and compete in the world. To make it more attractive for foreign experts to come, a special post was created at that time which guaranteed higher pay and other benefits such as housing and travel subsidies, with none of the administrative duties that were incumbent on local staff. These foreign guest instructor posts (*gaikokujin kyakuin koshi*) were limited term contracts of one or two years, but in practice they could be renewed indefinitely.

By the early 1990s, as Japan entered its economic decline, this post was singled out for criticism for contrasting reasons. From a financial perspective, they were seen to

be inefficient: teachers' salaries rose incrementally with age; thus a fifty-five year old teacher would be paid perhaps twice as much as one who was only thirty for what was ostensibly the same job. In 1993, the Monbusho issued guidelines to all national universities to cut their salary budgets and also to employ younger foreign teachers. It was understood by many universities that this was a barely veiled directive to fire older foreign teachers who fell into the top pay scales, and replace them with younger teachers under the age of 35 (Hall, 1998).

From an ideological perspective, however, the foreign guest lecturer position was seen as contrary to the spirit of internationalization. According to Hall (1998), the perpetuation of special contractual conditions for foreigners constituted a form of 'academic apartheid', since such conditions effectively denied foreign academics a voice in the running and future planning of their universities. From this point of view, removing the anachronistic special foreign post was seen as a positive step, placing foreigners on a level with their local Japanese counterparts. However, the majority of universities were averse to giving tenure to teachers who had been on limited term and limited participation contracts. Although some universities used the ministry's policy to terminate the employment of some older foreign teachers, the majority simply kept such teachers on in the same post waiting for retirement or natural attrition, but did not replace the post with an equivalent tenured position.

Although many teachers whose contracts were terminated in this way simply accepted their fate, a few took action by attempting to sue their universities. In the Introduction to this thesis, I cited the case of Gwen Gallagher, who won a small concession from Asahikawa University after her dismissal in 1996. Other litigation cases included the

Korst case at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa, the union action at Kumamoto Prefectural University, and the van Dresser case against Miyazaki International College, in which foreign teachers won or partially won redress against their universities (Shishin, 2002)

Although the summary dismissal of teachers is the most extreme form of discrimination against foreign teachers, other forms of discrimination are practiced by a number of universities. An organization that concerns itself with such discriminatory practices in Japanese higher education is the Professionalism, Administration and Leadership in Education (PALE) Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT). Its Editor, David Aldwinkle, who has now become a Japanese citizen known as Arudou Debito, has published online a greenlist and a blacklist of Japanese universities depending on their fairness and unfairness towards foreign faculty. One example of a university that appears on the blacklist is the private International Christian University in western Tokyo. Despite the university's 'international' title, employment practices for foreign faculty are strikingly different than those for Japanese faculty. Whereas Japanese academics are tenured from the time of their appointment, foreign staff must wait three years. Japanese academics receive three terms sabbatical; foreigners get only two. Japanese must come back for a minimum of one year after a sabbatical; foreigners must stay for two (<http://www.debito.org/blacklist.html>).

Some foreign teachers have gained the impression that they are singled out as targets of discrimination because of a general xenophobia in Japanese higher education (e.g. Hall, 1998; McVeigh, 2002). In an article published on the internet, Shishin states

baldly that ‘virtually all foreign English teachers face workplace discrimination in Japan’(2002, p.1). However, many Japanese academics also face discrimination and harassment from their universities. I have already mentioned the case of *ronin*, academics who are independent from the *habatsu* cliques that dominate a university or a department. Although many of them are accepted eventually, they may find themselves ignored or passed over for promotion, simply because they are not insiders. In addition, women academics are particularly vulnerable to what has been termed *akahara* (academic harassment), as Ueno (1997) has shown in her anthology of the personal narratives of women academics in Japanese universities. Thus, although there may be evidence of academic apartheid, or xenophobia, I would argue that Japanese higher education is characterized more by its extreme conservatism, and its attachment to hierarchies and seniority. From the present vantage point, now that universities have been cut loose from the financial support of the Monbusho, efforts to cut further costs are finally beginning to bite down on the more powerful, senior academics, through particularly unpopular moves to reduce retirement age and cut the formerly lucrative pensions.

4.3. The Teachers

Eleven teachers took part in the study and eight of these (four Japanese, three Americans, and an Englishman) are selected for reasons outlined in the previous chapter. Below I give a brief portrait of each of the teachers, who are listed in order of age:

4.3.1. Jane

An American woman in her mid-50s, Jane had been working in Japan for the past

eleven years. Her main employer was a major national university, and she also had two part-time jobs at private Japanese universities and one teaching composition at a US military base. Describing herself as 'European American', she grew up in the multicultural atmosphere of US military bases in Maryland and New Jersey. She majored in languages at university and spent a semester in Freiburg where she relished the mix of cultures in that city at the time. After graduation she moved up to Montreal with a fiancé and embarked on graduate studies in comparative literature. For a while, she thought that there were better prospects in teaching, so she obtained a teaching licence and gained experience, which she recalls as unpleasant, teaching English in Francophone public schools. A study trip to Poland led to her meeting her first husband. To be close to him, she first took a teaching job in Austria, then moved to Warsaw where she taught English for a Japanese kindergarten and international school.

As the political situation deteriorated in Poland, the family moved to Canada with their young child. Jane completed a masters degree in TESOL and remained with the university as an adjunct teacher and was appointed to start up and head an education center for adult immigrants. She considers this time to have been 'the golden years' of her teaching career. During this period, her marriage broke up, and she remarried a former student from Serbia. She claims that because her new husband was unhappy in the long cold Canadian winters, she took an opportunity to teach in Japan. Her first two years teaching were a 'culture shock'. Jane was frustrated by the discrepancy between her employers' request that she teach Communicative Language Teaching to trainee teachers and the reality that there was no support for this in schools. She returned to Canada, exhausted by the experience, but when a job offer to work in her

current post presented itself a few months later, she took it.

Jane has remained in the job for over ten years, and has worked part-time in a variety of higher education institutions. Her work in national universities is largely dissatisfying for reasons that Jane describes as a negative attitude within the educational system towards English, which she compares to the attitude she encountered teaching in public schools in Quebec at a time of virulent hostility towards the English and the English language. She is more satisfied with the work she has in a private junior college and at the US military base, because she feels that these institutions are more serious about pedagogical objectives and are more supportive of the teaching staff.

In her main job, Jane teaches a variety of skills classes around which the English curriculum is organized. She chooses to teach English for Academic Purposes, scorning more general EFL textbooks as something students could get in commercial language schools. However, she finds that her students are motivated only by the pressure to obtain good grades, almost never by the content of her courses. In addition to these undergraduate courses, Jane also offers additional graduate courses on teaching methodologies and research skills for teachers. Although this is beyond the remit of her contract, she is anxious to enhance her value in the eyes of the university, as the prospect of sweeping changes in the public higher education sector makes her less certain about job security. Although her university conducts some student evaluation of teachers, it does not engage in teacher professional development. Jane does pursue development independently, attending conferences and taking courses, for example, on business English and distance education. Despite her dissatisfaction

with her job, Jane is resigned to the shortcomings and happy to continue regarding Japan as merely 'a bread basket'.

4.3.2. John

John has been in Japan for thirty years, coming originally as a draftee in the US army to Okinawa. There he developed an interest in Japanese-American international relations and returned to study the language while undertaking a bachelors degree in history. He did not return to the US, but graduated from an American university in Tokyo. He stayed on afterwards, working first in journalism as a reporter and editor. With a Japanese wife and two young children to support, he changed to what seemed to be a more profitable career in academia, with the help of a friend of his father-in-law.

After a few years teaching, he began to feel increasingly dissatisfied with the job. He enrolled in a masters program, while at the same time working as a translator at a government institute, and running a radio English language show. Although the strain of all the work led to a nervous breakdown, he recovered and went on to complete his masters, then continue on to write a doctorate in pragmatics. After the masters he moved from his first university to one with higher status and a better level of students. At the time of the interview, he was about to move again to a tenured position at a yet more prestigious private university. He was hopeful that in the new job he would have a better chance of influencing curriculum change, an area in which in his current post he had felt sidelined. He feels that his fluent Japanese has been both an asset and a liability, in this regard, since although it has given him job opportunities he has seen

denied to other well qualified foreign teachers, it has also landed him with the tasks that his Japanese colleagues do not want.

John's method and style of teaching come mainly from his postgraduate studies in Applied Linguistics, including his doctoral study. He discovered that students responded well to role plays and to task-based activities, particularly if they were left to accomplish these tasks without excessive interference from the teacher. Successful classes, in his view, are the result of good classroom management, and he often berates himself in front of students if an activity has not turned out as well as he expected. Generally, John feels that he has lost a connection that he once had with his students, perhaps due to the widening age gap between them, and complained about occasional discipline problems in class.

4.3.3. Harumi

In her early 40s, Harumi is a tenured professor of linguistics at a prestigious national university where she took her bachelors and masters degrees. She lived in America between the ages of five and eight, and in Australia between the ages of twelve and fifteen, and has retained her native-like fluency and Australian accent. She wanted to be a teacher from an early age, playing 'school' with her sister and friends, and was particularly influenced by a German teacher she had at high school in Australia. She had chosen to specialize in linguistics from before entering university, and she did not deviate from this choice. Continuing on to graduate studies in phonetics, she worked closely with her supervisor, assisting him in the writing of a new textbook on phonetics.

After completing her masters degree, Harumi found part-time work at several universities and continued to work on her research. After two years, she was invited to apply for a permanent post at her alma mater. The selection committee had been divided over a more eminent scholar and, in Harumi's view, she represented a less contentious choice. Shortly after her appointment, she was awarded government funding to spend a research year abroad. Harumi chose to enroll on a masters course at a British university, although she already had a masters in the same subject from Japan. Her reason was partly to reassure herself that her own teaching of phonetics was in line with that done in the UK.

Presenting herself as a strict teacher, Harumi teaches a few classes of 'general English', and otherwise teaches in her area of specialty: she lectures on phonetics to first and second year undergraduates, takes 'seminar' groups of third and fourth year students planning to write their graduation thesis in her subject, and oversees graduates working in her area. Over the years, Harumi's work time has been increasingly taken up by administrative duties. As with all the academics at her university, she is appointed to various committees dealing with university affairs that have ranged from problems with individual students to curriculum reform to relocation from the city center to a greenfield site on the outskirts of Tokyo. Harumi claims not to particularly enjoy this aspect of her work, but is clearly feels herself to be an integral and important member of her university community. In addition to this role, she continues to be involved in textbook development in her field, as well as research in the area of comparative phonetics.

4.3.4. Hiro

Hiro went to university with an ambition to become a writer or poet. Half-way through his undergraduate study, he joined a reading group in which he became acquainted with the work of Empson, and suddenly decided that he wanted to be a literary critic. After finishing his first degree, with the support of his graduate supervisor and the professor who had organized the Empson reading group, he applied to do a masters degree in English Literature in the UK. He struggled through a first year studying Jacobean literature and postmodern theories, then was accepted to stay on as a doctoral student. After six years, he received a letter from his supervisor in Japan, suggesting that he apply for a post that had become vacant at the Law Faculty of his university. Although Hiro had not yet completed his doctorate, and although he was not keen to leave England at that stage, he realized that he may not be given another opportunity and so returned to a job in Tokyo.

To his disappointment, when he returned the university refused to appoint him to a full-time job, on the grounds that he was not yet thirty years old. In order to 'prove his loyalty', they offered him a part-time for a year, promising to give him a tenured post the following year. Hiro complied and used the year to familiarize himself with teaching English in Japan and to finish his doctorate.

Hiro claims that he was a very unpopular teacher in his first years of teaching at a Japanese university. After his experiences in England, he hoped to treat Japanese undergraduates in the same way, expecting them to read regularly large amounts of literature in English. The students rebelled, refusing to do the work he set, and even

complaining to the administration. Eventually, Hiro changed his expectations and his methods, turning to standard EFL course books for his compulsory first and second year classes, and to more interesting, but difficult texts for the optional courses for more motivated third and fourth year students. A specialist in seventeenth century literature and postmodern theory, Hiro has no opportunity to teach in the area of his expertise at the Law Faculty. However, he has developed a new area of specialty in film studies, for which he attended courses at the British Film Institute. However, this field was regarded as not serious by some of the members of the Law Faculty, and Hiro was feeling increasingly isolated as a language teacher in an academic community dominated by lawyers.

4.3.5. Kaoru

Kaoru is becoming increasingly well-known in Japan as a translator of modern Western drama and fiction, following in the footsteps of his famous father, who is an academic and leading figure in Japan's theater world as a translator, director and critic. He did not start out life with that ambition, and claims that his parents (his mother was also an academic) did not exert any pressure on him in that direction. At school and university, he was more preoccupied with football and music. However, after majoring in English literature, he succeeded in passing the tough graduate entrance examination and went on to do a masters degree, with a thesis on D.H. Lawrence.

After graduating, Kaoru married a fellow graduate student, and the young couple was helped by Kaoru's father to study for a year in London, where they were both accepted on masters programs. On their return, Kaoru taught English in a high school

and one of the elite cram schools, preparing students for entrance exams to the top universities, before being appointed to a tenured position in the Economics Faculty of a large Tokyo university. There, Kaoru taught translation and lectured on D.H. Lawrence, which was criticized by faculty colleagues as inappropriate for economics majors.

After a couple of years, Kaoru moved to the Literature Faculty of his alma mater, where his former graduate cohort were by then moving into positions of influence. Kaoru was now beginning to make a name for himself as a translator and was able to use his experiences translating popular British culture as the basis of his lectures and classes.

4.3.6. Dave

Dave is an Englishman in his early 40s. From his early teens, he had been a keen athlete, but apart from wanting to continue competing in sports, had no clear idea of what career he would choose. After graduating from university with a degree in geography, he started work as a management trainee at McDonalds, but left after six months on the advice of a friend who told him that TEFL was 'more fun'. After taking the RSA diploma, he traveled to Japan to work for a large English language school. Dave was dissatisfied with his first job, because it was very restrictive about teaching practices and materials, and because it sent him to work in a remote rural district. After a year, he moved to another company in Tokyo, where the work was more interesting and where he found himself in a community of supportive fellow teachers.

At this stage his sporting career was still a priority. He left Japan to do a masters in Sports Psychology in Oregon, where he could also train in preparation for the Seoul Olympics. After the year, he returned to England via Thailand for the trials, but failed to qualify due to illness. For a few years afterwards he worked in sports administration in the UK, but returned to Japan, to be near his wife's family. He returned to teach for his old company, and started teaching part-time at a university. The same year, by chance, he met someone who offered him a full-time job at a national university just outside Tokyo, where he has worked for the last seven years.

During this time, Dave has continued to pursue academic and teaching qualifications, obtaining a masters from a British university and at the time of the interviews, more than half-way through a doctorate in education at a second university. He had also taken the RSA diploma, because he felt he had a gap in his knowledge. Talking about his teaching, he expressed most pride in his writing instruction, which he had developed in his university teaching through action research projects and through his involvement with a group of teachers who had originally met at a workshop on teaching writing. Unlike the other foreign teachers interviewed, Dave seems to be most satisfied with his job. He respects his students and feels he has good relations with his Japanese colleagues. The only exception is the other foreign teacher, who takes a very different approach to teaching.

4.3.7. Dana

Dana, a thirty-year old American woman, has been teaching in Japan for around seven years, working her way up from small private language schools to far more lucrative and prestigious work teaching at universities. She grew up in Los Angeles and after a

rebellious teenage when she dropped out of an expensive private school for a career in rock music, she settled down to higher education in a community college and then to university.

Finally dropping music and majoring in psychology, Dana started work in psychiatric nursing and for a while harboured an ambition to become a psychologist or psychiatrist. As a first step, she got a job at a research institute, but disliked the doctors with whom she had to work. She decided on a whim to leave and go to Japan with her husband who was also unhappy in his job in LA. Within a week of arriving in Japan, Dana found work at a private English conversation school, which she took to instantly. Her popularity and success led her to be rapidly appointed to an administrative position in the company, where she soon came up against conflicts with the administration and other staff. She left to join a smaller company where she enjoyed a good relationship with the people, but disliked teaching businessmen, who she claims expected her to entertain them rather than teach. Finally she left and went back to the original school where she had the time to work on a masters in the humanities, specializing in creative writing.

With her masters qualification, Dana was able to move into university teaching, and through contacts made at teaching conferences and through friends, she was able to build up a number of part-time jobs at various universities and vocational schools. Of all her jobs, her favourite has been a nursing college, because of her own experiences in nursing. She has felt no compunction about leaving jobs at the end of a year if she has any problems with students or administration. At the time of the interviews, all

her work was in higher education, which gave her enough money and long holidays to pursue her main ambition to become a writer.

Without any formal teaching qualifications, Dana has developed her teaching techniques and materials from the basic PPP principles she learnt in her first teaching job, from materials that she has developed in her teaching over the years, and from conversations with her husband, who had been a high school teacher in the U.S.

4.3.8 Maiko

Maiko is the youngest of the teachers, still in her twenties. At the time of the interviews, she had been teaching in Japan for the last three years, returning there after sixteen years in the United States between the ages of eight and 24. A precocious child, she won a national essay-writing competition in Japan before she moved to the United States at the age of eight. Unable to speak much English, she had been placed in an ESL class, taken out of mainstream classes and, humiliatingly, helped to read by a first-grade student. She was spurred by this to work harder than her peers, and read everything she could. At the age of 14, she was identified as a 'gifted child' and moved into a special gifted child program, which enabled her to take all the credits she needed and start taking university credits before she finished school.

After a rocky start to university life, where she found herself to be socially immature and out of her depth, she restarted the following year majoring in English literature. She went on to do a masters in creative writing. Although she had originally aimed to become an academic, she changed her mind by the end of her first degree and fixed

her sights on becoming a writer. Her first volume of short stories was in the process of being published at the time of the interviews.

After completing her masters, Maiko intended to obtain an internship at a publishing company, but a professor at her university recommended her for a teaching job instead. She taught composition and creative writing for a year at an Ivy league school and a state university, but could not renew her visa for longer. She returned to Japan where her sister helped her find a part-time teaching position at a prestigious private university and where she also obtained work translating at one of the ministries. Later, she got a part-time job teaching composition at an American university in Tokyo. Although she does not see teaching as her career goal, she believes that it will provide her with useful experiences that will help her to become a better writer.

4.4 Teacher categories

As is apparent from these brief summaries of the teachers’ lives and careers, there is considerable variety in the career stories they describe. However, it is possible to delineate three categories into which they might be grouped. These categories are determined by the teachers’ positions within the institutions for which they work in Japan.

These positions are summarized in the following table:

Fig. 1 Teacher qualifications and position

Teacher	Nationality	Years teaching in Japan/other	Qualifications	Position in institution
Jane	American	12/18	MA Comp. Lit MA TESOL	Visiting Foreign Lecturer
John	American	20	MA App Ling PhD App Ling	Tenured: moving to new tenured
Harumi	Japanese	17	MA Phonetics J MA Phonetic UK	Tenured 15 years
Hiro	Japanese	17	MA Eng lit UK PhD Eng lit UK	Tenured 14 years
Kaoru	Japanese	17	MA Eng lit JPN MA Eng lit UK	Tenured 8 yrs at present univ
Dave	British	12	MA Sports Psych MA TESP	Visiting Foreign lecturer
Dana	American	7	MA Humanities	Part-time at 3 universities
Maiko	Japanese	3/1	MA Creative Writing	Part-time at 2 universities

The eight teachers presented here are all ‘successful’ teachers, in the sense that they all work at top universities in Japan, positions which pay more and command higher social status than any other teaching jobs in that country (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of participant selection). Although I shall want to examine the specific ways in which individual teachers are positioned and position themselves, it is worth pointing out that they can be divided into three distinct groups based on their status and security within the university hierarchy.

4.4.1. Tenured academics

One group consists of tenured academics, namely Harumi, Hiro, Kaoru and John. The Japanese teachers have much in common: all of them are currently employed in the same university where they themselves studied; all of them were helped into their jobs through the patronage of a former professor; none of them have experienced any other kind of career path (although Kaoru conducts his academic career alongside a burgeoning career as a literary translator). In all these respects, John is different: he started his first degree in the United States and completed it at a Japanese university, and his masters and doctoral degrees were obtained at another American university in Japan; John obtained his first academic post through a family connection, and his two subsequent jobs through open competition. Finally, John entered academia after several years working in journalism, believing that academia would be more financially profitable and secure. Obviously, John is different too because he is not Japanese, but he himself draws attention to the fact that it is Japanese language ability and long experience in Japan, more than his research qualifications and publications, that have

singled him out above other non-Japanese applicants he has run against for jobs. It is also notable that John is the most highly qualified of all the teachers who are presented in this study.

John had succeeded in breaking into the top group, gaining tenure at a time when personal contacts were perhaps more important than qualifications or experience (of which he had neither at the time). Could he have continued in the same position in which he started without any academic self-development? Perhaps so. John recalls that his success in obtaining first a masters and then a doctorate in Applied Linguistics was not viewed at all favourably by his first employer, but rather his affiliation with another university through his studies was seen as a sign of disloyalty. On the other hand, John draws attention to a former colleague who is now dissatisfied with his position and envies John his success in moving first to one and then another even more prestigious university with higher caliber students.

The Japanese teachers have led rather more stable career paths, but some similar sentiments can be detected. Hiro observes that his university's stipulation that he work for a year part-time before they would consent to employ him full-time was a test of his loyalty after his seven years studying in the UK. Kaoru's development as an academic in the field of English literature seems to have culminated with his masters degree in England before his first university appointment, since when his career as a literary translator has developed. Interestingly, Harumi did embark on a second masters degree after she had obtained tenure at her university, but she makes it clear that she was not expected to do so either by her university or by the state body from whom she obtained the funding. She claims that her motive for doing the

masters was in fact to confirm that her own teaching practices were in line with those in the UK, rather than to stimulate personal intellectual growth. For all the teachers in this group, membership in the university is seen as most important, and sometimes (John, Hiro) most problematic aspect of their work. This substantiates Wadden's (1993) claim that a tenured post in Japanese academia entails a more or less exclusive affiliation with one's employer, and that efforts in academic endeavors generally take second place to the energies that academics are expected to expend on behalf of the administration of their department.

4.4.2. Foreign guests

A second group comprises teachers on *foreign guest teacher contracts* (*gaikokujin kyakuin koshi*). Jane and Dave belong to this group. Although their employment contracts were renewed year after year, in Jane's case eleven years, in Dave's seven, they were technically limited term contracts. As described in the previous chapter, these positions exonerated the teachers from most of the administrative duties of the department, a situation which kept them in the margins of collegiate life. Although both teachers had been in Japan for some time, they both obtained their academic and teaching qualifications and had worked in other countries. Both of them too had spent several years teaching EFL or ESL to adults not in the formal higher education sector. Jane was the director of an immigrant education center in Montreal, while Dave worked in England after completing his RSA training, then in Japan for several years for two separate language schools. In different ways, and for different reasons that I shall address later in the following chapter, both acknowledged some ambivalence about their commitment to staying in Japan. Just as I pointed out that John is untypical in the tenured group, because he is not Japanese, it is worth mentioning that

this second group is restricted to foreigners; Japanese teachers are limited to either part-time work or tenure.

Although for both Dave and Jane, their present positions represent a high point in their careers in terms of salary, there are other factors that render the jobs less than satisfactory. Unlike the tenured teachers, whose levels of involvement and responsibility within their institutional community are likely to increase, this kind of progression is not part of the foreign teachers' career profile. Dave, for example, though happy with the job, still harbours an ambition to move up a career ladder. Prompted by the educational needs of his children, Dave is considering a move back to the UK and is applying for jobs in British universities, but does not know whether he is in a strong enough position to break into the academic job mill in that country. Jane, meanwhile, is extremely dissatisfied with her full-time job, particularly the lack of status that the job commands. Despite the lack of recognition by their current employers, both Dave and Jane have continually devoted considerable energy to expanding their professional knowledge and skill through academic and teacher development courses and participation in informal and formal professional associations.

4.4.3. Part-timers

A third group consisting of Dana and Maiko are *part-timers*, who work at more than one university. Both express a reluctance to express any affiliation either with the universities where they are employed, or even with the identity of being a teacher. Dana and Maiko are far less committed to the prospect of a career in language

teaching. Indeed, their present engagement in this career is presented as arbitrary and opportunistic. Both women are more intent on a long-term careers as writers, although neither is in a position to support herself through writing alone.

In the categorization scheme that I have employed, this group is most problematic. Both teachers are considerably younger than the other teachers who took part in the study, and both have other career options that might or might not turn out to be the path they ultimately choose. On the other hand, both may choose to remain in teaching and could move from their present group into one or other of the higher status groups.

Classifying teachers into groups according to their positions of status highlights one important variable. However, it is important to remember that many of the teachers here have belonged to other categories at one time or another. Both Hiro and John have always been in the tenured group, but Harumi worked part-time at several universities for a couple of years before her appointment to a post at her university, while Kaoru worked in a high school and cram school before his first full-time job at a university. Similarly, Dave started university work in Japan gradually moving from his commercial language school to part-time university jobs, through which a work acquaintance helped secure for him his current full-time job. Dana's career path is quite similar, moving from commercial language school teaching to part-time teaching in higher education, and looking for more permanent work if she can get it. In fixing these categories, however, my purpose is not to essentialise the people in each group, but rather to underline how these job positions are vitally important to the way the teachers view themselves and their careers. It is very much more reasonable

for a teacher with tenure to consider that as a constant, stable career choice than it is for a teacher who works on one-year contracts which could be terminated for reasons that are outside of that teacher's control.

The three status groups that I have suggested are not the only way to categorise language teachers in Japanese higher education. There are also grounds for suggesting other lines of categorization. As discussed in Chapter One (p.23), for example, Holliday (1994) has suggested viewing ELT and academia as typologically distinct. Whereas ELT exhibits an 'integrationist' code, academics adhere to a 'collectionist' code (Bernstein 1974, cited by Holliday, 1994), which influences not only the way in which the teaching is organized (e.g. learner-centred versus teacher-fronted) but also the choice of content (e.g. practical versus theoretical). These differences will be examined more closely in the following chapters. However, my aim in identifying precisely these categories has been to highlight the importance of social positioning, as a precursor to examining the positionings that the teachers adopt in their own accounts of their careers and their teaching practices.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set the scene for the narrative studies that follow, describing the Japanese higher education system and the place of foreign language teaching and teachers within that system, introducing the teachers in the study, and problematising the view that these teachers belong to a single professional category of language teachers. The main points that I wish to highlight are as follows:

- Although contextualisation is an important element of all social studies, in this case it is crucial, since the notion of identity as position forces us to attend to where the teachers are located on various contextual levels, such as the higher educational institution where they work, the wider society in Japan, or Japanese history.
- The position of foreign teachers differs from that of Japanese because until recently they could only be employed on special, limited 'foreigner contracts', and because in addition to the hierarchical society common to higher educational institutions everywhere, Japanese higher education is characterized by a prevalence of cliques and a reluctance to admit any outsiders.
- I drew attention to the recent change in the status of foreign teachers, which has arguably given rise to instances of discrimination and unfairness, as in the case of Gwen Gallagher, and which has increased levels of insecurity felt by many teachers in this group.
- The brief summaries of the teachers' lives as recounted in the interviews reveal considerable diversity in the background of the foreign teachers, though less so in the case of the Japanese teachers.
- This diversity among the teachers gives rise to the suggestion that, rather than viewing these teachers as belonging to a single professional category, it may be more realistic to divide them into three groups: highly committed tenured

academics, foreign ‘guest’ teachers, and part-time or ‘accidental’ teachers.

The differences between the groups will be further explored in the next chapter, where I examine teachers’ representations of their careers and professional identity.

Having provided a context for the teachers’ stories, let me now move to the narrative analysis in Chapters Five to Seven, in which the teachers’ professional and cultural identity is explored through their career affiliations, their sense of belonging in an academic community, and the positions they adopt toward English.

CHAPTER FIVE

CAREER AFFILIATIONS OF EFL TEACHERS

5.1. Introduction

I turn now to a close examination of the interviews with the teachers. In the Introduction to this thesis, the story of Gwen Gallagher's claim of unfair dismissal led me to wonder whether Japanese and non-Japanese teachers can be said to belong to the same profession, and in Chapter One, I drew attention to a number of problems concerning language teachers' professional identity, for example, the lack of agreement concerning not only whether or not teaching is a profession, but also whether or not professionalism is necessarily desirable. As we saw in the previous chapter, teachers' career trajectories, particularly those of the non-Japanese teachers, exhibited considerable variety, both in the paths that they have taken to reach the position of university teachers, but also in the way they envisaged future career development. The purpose of this chapter is to examine and compare teachers' representations of their professional identity, as a way of further exploring the problems raised in the previous chapter of conceptualizing language teaching as a profession.

In this chapter, three teachers – one from each of the teacher categories identified in the previous chapter – are chosen as case studies for an analysis of the professional identities that they construct for themselves and for others. After analyzing a narrative extracted from the transcripts of each of the teachers, I discuss the similarities and differences between the three teachers from the point of view of positioning along life

trajectories and in relation to particular social and professional ‘fields’ in the sense that the term is used by Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1993).

5.2. Defining career

Before discussing the career histories of the teachers in this study, it will be helpful to be clear about what is meant by a career. One web-based dictionary has the following definition:

(1) the general progression of your working or professional life; and (2) the particular occupation for which you are trained” (www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/career).

(1) and (2) are subtly different: the first sees a career as almost synonymous with a life; although the definition stipulates a ‘progression’, it need not be an upward trajectory. Common collocations, such as ‘a checkered career’ or a ‘disastrous career’ suggest that a working life can consist of many different occupations, or be a series of failures. The common thread however is that the notion of ‘career’ gives the apparently disparate work-related events of a lifetime a coherent unity. The ‘progression’ notion seems to allow for limitless variation (any individual’s life history thus constitutes a career). Thus, this definition does not easily lend itself as a basis for comparing people.

The second definition provides a different and narrower focus. Whereas the first definition seems to be backward-looking and descriptive, this one is more prescriptive, envisaging career work as something that follows a definite pattern of

training followed by engagement in a single occupation. Here, because there is an expected series of roles, it might be more reasonable to compare people, particularly at similar stages in their career.

The definition of a career as a 'particular occupation for which you are trained' has clear parallels with the traditional or naïve definition of profession, as we saw in Chapter One. This is also reflected in a definition used in a study conducted by the Centre for British Teachers (1989, cited by Johnston, 1997), which Johnston takes as a yardstick for gauging whether or not English teachers in Poland could be said to have careers. Defining a career as 'a staged progression of posts with increasing responsibility and income', The Centre for British Teachers study found that this kind of career advancement is not typical of the experience of many language teachers, particularly ex-pats in EFL. According to the Centre, language teachers with several years of experience behind them often 'have nowhere to go but sideways'.

Johnston (1997, 1999) agrees with this view overall, finding in the doctoral study that he conducted in Poland that language teachers' career histories are often more complicated and more fragmented than the traditional or bureaucratic view of a career suggests. Few teachers in this study were even willing to affiliate themselves wholeheartedly with the career identity of language teacher. His long interviews with Polish and native teachers of English indicated that teachers tend to feel that they occupy a marginal position within institutions, and that they counteract this by their resistance to any expression of commitment, often citing their affiliation to alternative career identities, for example, as translators or writers instead (Johnston, 1997).

Moreover, in a subsequent analysis of the same study, Johnston (1999) drew attention

to the tendency of ex-pat teachers to resist a teleological understanding of their career paths, to the multiple identities that teachers ascribe to themselves, and to the complex motivations that propel them to make the career choices they do.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the situation concerning English language education in Japan is also somewhat uncertain. The definition of a career as ‘a staged progression of posts with increasing responsibility and income’ is characteristic of Japanese higher education where life tenure is granted from the first full-time appointment and incremental salary rises are based on age. The career structure based on staged progression is most characteristic of a civil service; indeed, in Japan, teachers working in national universities are classified as public servants (Hall, 1998). Moreover, we cannot simply regard a career as being synonymous with a job. Although there do still exist career jobs, such as the civil service and decreasingly, large companies, people in many lines of work, including teaching, move in order to advance their careers, whether for a higher salary or more responsibility, or usually both.

In the following three sections, I examine the transcripts of Harumi, Dave and Dana for evidence of the way they view their careers. What kind of career is language teaching for them?

5.3. Harumi: a woman in Japanese academia

Harumi presents herself as an academic in good standing at the university where she has worked for more than a decade. The confidence and satisfaction that she conveys with regard to her career sets her apart from the other participants in this study. Her

career path follows the traditional bureaucratic model in its steady upward progression of income, responsibility and status. In many respects, it also resembles the kind of path to seniority in a community of practice described by Lave and Wenger (1991): as a graduate student, she was allowed limited participation in a project compiling a new phonetics textbook. Later, she joined a team of specialists as an equal. Now it is she who selects favoured graduate students to check details and create new practical exercises for the textbooks, legitimating their role as ‘peripheral participants’ in the discourse community (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Swales, 1990; 1998) of phonetics specialists in Japan. In her tenured position, she has devoted increasing amounts of time to administrative tasks such as participation on committees and management of part-time teachers.

The following extract is taken from the third interview:

Harumi (3) pp.12-13

What are the other factors that are important ... (cough) you know in having a career a good career in academia?

I think you have to really *like* ... what you are doing. It's not like working for a company where you can change if you don't like it. You can go to another place to work, you can't really do that. So you have to really like what you're doing and be able to .. um bear (laughs) the difficulties until you get a good place to work in. Really you don't know when you'll get a full time job, so you have to I don't know if .. if you had a family to support it would be very difficult.

Yeah, is that something that makes it particularly difficult for women? To have a career in academia?

Um, I don't know. Um I didn't really feel that because I was a woman I, it was more difficult than for men. Maybe it's easier for a woman actually ... in Japan where men are expected to get married and support the family, whereas the woman isn't really expected to support, and many women say they don't want a full-time job they just want part-time teaching. So I suppose it's a little bit easier for women. 'Cos their families, their parents, they don't expect the daughter to support them. So if the daughter has to go to graduate school for extra years and can't find a job and has to do part-time teaching, the parents don't really mind, whereas if their son was doing that, well, I don't really know (laughs)

Mm, is that because of there's a kind of perception that women are to be supported anyway? (laughs)

Mm. (laughs) Yeah, you can view that as an advantage (laughs) And in other fields like science it's very difficult for women to become full-time researchers, but in languages there tend to be more women ... though not as many as there should be. For instance, at my university, when I was a student there used to be only just one or maybe two full-time female teachers out of say 120 or 130, just one or two. Then when I was hired, by the time I was hired there were more than ten. Still, it's only ten, right? [yeah] We still do have a group, we used to have a women teachers' group and we'd meet once a year at the beginning when a new

woman teacher came, and then we'd say one of these days there's going to be more women than men and the men'll have to have these gatherings instead (laughs) But still it's not half; over 70% of the students are girls. There's still only 20% of the teaching staff. Which isn't very many ... but if you compare it with the science department.

Right, mm. Is that a factor do you think in choice of career for people entering that stage in their lives now? And have you found that a problem, because when you started there weren't many role models if you like, there weren't many women professors, if there was only one, that's quite er.

Yeah, it *was* difficult. Because I went to a girls high school both in Australia and in Japan, the majority of teachers were women and not men, and in a girls school, there'd be only two or three men, the rest would be women. So I had role models up till then. I think that's one of the reasons that I've always wanted to become a teacher. Not necessarily, well, not, I never dreamt of becoming a university teacher, but I've always wanted to be a teacher because I had good role models, women teachers and I knew that women could keep working in that field and it was good as a career and then when I entered university there wasn't any female teachers ... and so I kind of thought oh, OK, this isn't for women, it's just for men and I had no idea how to become a university teacher, of the route. And so until I actually became one, I always thought I'd go and teach high school [...] In order to get a job you need a network (laughs) of people telling you that there is a job opening at a certain place and you need someone to write a letter of reference. And sometimes the university might even go to that person and ask about the

person and if the person says something negative about you, well. So compared to people looking for jobs in a company I mean you don't really need a letter of reference if you're a job seeker because there's a set time for people to go round looking for work if you're looking to work in a firm. So compared to that I think you need a network of people around you. Not just one, but you need to be on good terms with everyone around you.

The positions that Harumi takes with regard to her career must of course be seen as influenced by the context of the ongoing interview and in the context of the positions that have been established in the previous two interviews. It is worth pointing out in this regard that a position that she has succeeded in establishing (since it is accepted by me) is her self-definition as an 'academic' rather than as a 'language teacher' or any other possible work categorisation.

Within the passage itself, there are significant shifts in her position as she attempts to assert one position and rebut another that is inadvertently introduced by me through a misunderstanding of the schema associated with her position. To some degree, this whole discussion about the position of women in academia in Japan is a digression from what she started saying in answer to my question, and that she eventually resumes at the end of this narrative.

In a previous interview, Harumi had described how her own career took off relatively quickly. Unlike many academic job-seekers in Japan, she had to wait only a couple of years before being appointed to her present position on the recommendation of one of her previous teachers, which she modestly attributes to luck at first (which is picked

up but rejected as not worthy of further discussion by me) but later, she comes to explain her success in terms of the 'networks' of people she had to cultivate in order to get on.

In this narrative there are three kinds of career mentioned, which Harumi uses as a way of defining her affiliation with academia. Both at the beginning and at the end of the narrative, she compares academia with a job in a company. According to Harumi, working as an academic requires that you 'really like' your subject, since unlike working for a company, you cannot change easily (she does not specify whether she means the job or the subject). This serves to justify Harumi's position in at least two different ways: firstly, she is justified in the fact that she has built her career in academia, since she really does like her subject, and secondly, it is the kind of career that simply does not allow for such changes of mind or negative feelings. There is a mixture here of representing her career as an active choice (she really likes phonetics) and as a passive acceptance of the constraints it places upon her (she cannot change easily). There is further evidence of this at the end of the narrative, when she again chooses to compare academia with company employment. Contrasting the rituals of job-hunting in academia with that of commerce, graduate applicants to companies have to find jobs in a 'set time' and they do not require letters of reference from their university. For aspiring academics, there is no 'set time' for job hunting; individual job seekers have to keep abreast of job openings which may arise. Moreover, since they are already in the field, they need a network of people who can vouch for them. Being an academic for Harumi is thus a career that started prior to graduating, which is not the case for her counterparts who went to work for companies.

The other career, school teaching, is presented as a more plausible alternative: she had always wanted to be a teacher and there were many good role models at her high schools. Returning to Sacks' (1974) discussion of membership categorisation, categories tend to have internal hierarchies. It could be argued that schoolteachers and university teachers belong to the same membership category of teachers, but university teachers are in a higher social position. Harumi gives us evidence that this is indeed how she sees the relationship ('I never dreamt of becoming a university teacher, but I've always wanted to be a teacher...'). Without stating the matter directly, she constructs a social hierarchy in which she positions herself at the top end. Her claim that school teaching was her first ambition thus functions as self-deprecation. Self-deprecation itself is an interesting social strategy in which the speaker at once signals a high social or moral position, and at the same time a moral disclaimer that this is in any way important (although it clearly is).

Although this narrative reveals Harumi's strong affiliation with a membership category of academics, it is also significant for what turns out to be a complicating factor of gender. In fact, this is an issue that is introduced by me, not Harumi. Harumi had alluded to difficulties in the early stages of an academic career before securing full-time employment, 'if you had to support a family.' My question ('is that something that makes it particularly difficult for women?') reveals that at this point we are employing two quite different schemata. The membership category that is salient for Harumi in her discourse is 'academics', a group that consists mostly of men, as becomes clear in her subsequent example of the predominance of males in Japanese academia, including languages, where the majority of the students are women. For me, however, the mention of 'supporting a family' suggests a

membership category of 'working women'. This explains Harumi's initial inability to answer the question, and her subsequent re-positioning, asserting that, in fact, a career in academia is probably easier for women than men. At this point, however, she shifts to consider the roles implied by the new membership category, by which she can justify her assertion. Accordingly, there are different social roles for sons and daughters, where the former are expected to raise and support families of their own, while it is expected that daughters will continue to be supported by their parents until they are married or can support themselves.

Harumi's position concerning gender roles appears to shift around. On the one hand, she sees the gender imbalance among the staff at her university as reprehensible, particularly as more than two-thirds of the students are female. On the other hand, she sees that the situation is changing gradually, and that at least compared with the science departments there are jobs for women. However, on the other hand, there are certain conflicts, or 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al, 1988) over what she considers to be appropriate roles for women and men. As an unmarried woman able to devote herself fully to her job, this dilemma probably does not present itself that often. Where dilemmas are raised (is it an advantage or appropriate for a woman in academia or not?), there is an awkward mismatch of schemata: women generally in Japanese society who are supposed to be supported by husbands or parents, and thus have lower, dependent status, versus academics, among whom there are few women, who occupy a position of high social standing.

5.4. Dave: the dilemmas of ambition

Dave presents himself as a committed and enthusiastic teacher, proud of his

achievements in gaining academic qualifications and in his teaching practice. Unlike Harumi, his career has not followed a single, upwards path, but has changed direction on more than one occasion. Having worked at a national university in Japan for seven years, at the time of this interview he was applying for jobs back in the UK, where he felt his children would have better educational opportunities.

The following extract comes from the final interview where Dave is asked about ambition:

Dave (3) pp. 4-5

So ambitions ... I really want to look after my kids and my wife. That's my ambition ... now. And if in order to do that I have to get a job in *Britain* [laughs] then I'll try and get one.

(laughs). The horror, the horror.

Well it *is* you know. I enjoy living in Japan and there is a freedom with the current job of doing anything you want and I really like that. And I'm a bit nervous about going back to a more restrictive environment. And I've got used to having relatively large amounts of money. You know, I've never had that before until I got this job. I've never been able to spend money, but that's never bothered me ... or my wife, she er is not, we get on very well because we're pretty similar minded in that way, we lived in the States and we lived in Britain on little money and it wasn't a big problem at all. But I think we've both got used to a relatively large

salary. And there's something, a great sense of power [laughs] you know, I've got *this* in my wallet [laughs] that kind of thing. And I'm nervous about that going back to Britain, where even if I get a great job, we'll still be on one salary for the family, not that well off. So I'm nervous about that too. But you know ... ambition, I've seen other people who are going on the academic line, who are doing things to climb the ladder of academic success. I kind of know what you should do, but I'm not desperate to do that. You know, I like to potter along in my own way. To do well, you know, write things, make nice presentations, to have a good reputation if you like, that would be great.

But you are active, you're very active going to conferences, giving presentations?

Yeah, I think so, yes.

So that kind of thing all suggests that it's all for a purpose, to a greater end?

Well, yes, actually now this morning I've written up my CV, I'm realising I should have done other things ... when you do things there is a part of you that says oh that'd be good for the CV, but I must admit that's not been prominent for me, it's been because oh that would be an interesting experience, and I can gain that experience and it might be useful to improve me as a teacher educator or researcher. But just recently like paper qualifications are important, yeah, 'cause that's how you get judged. You can't talk to someone for five hours on a tape and convince them that you're a good bloke ... I've always, I'm confident about interviews and getting jobs actually... I don't know if there's any reason for that.

But just as I'm starting to think about jobs now, I'm not confident because I haven't got many refereed articles. Though whenever I'm in a situation with other teachers or people who work for universities and stuff, I think I'm pretty good at holding my own and knowing what I'm talking about. So I'm confident on that point of view, but not from the CV point of view. But I'll see, I've never applied for a job in a university in Britain before. So it'll be interesting to see what they say. If they write back and they're laughing saying what on earth do you think you're doing. Or if they write back and say we're interested in this, there are one or two weaknesses but we want to interview you... That might happen. I hope it'll happen.

Although the focus (and refrain) of this narrative is ambition, there are many instances where Dave constructs varying positions for himself with regard to his career. As with Harumi, many of these positions are constructed through oppositions. Dave maneuvers himself defensively through these positions. At several points, he takes a position, only to undermine it in the following sentence. The main impression that this conveys is Dave's lack of confidence, even nervousness about applying for jobs in Britain, and it is surely his fear of failure that explains his unwillingness to commit himself to a firm career affiliation. Nevertheless, through the course of this stretch of narrative a picture does emerge of the kind of career that Dave envisages, both in terms of his present position and the future that he hopes for.

The first shift in this narrative is to a position in which Dave denies or at least downsizes the importance of his commitment to personal success in his career ('so ambitions ... I really want to look after my kids and my wife'). This statement serves

as the rationale for leaving his current employment, a decision that is not without risks, as he does not know whether he will be able to find similar employment (or better) at a British university. Going to Britain ('I have to get a job in *Britain*') positions Dave and me together briefly in a shared membership category for whom going back to Britain might be a good move, which I acknowledge by extending the irony ('*the horror, the horror*'). However, Dave chooses to reposition himself by treating my ironic phrase as literal ('well it *is* you know'). Rather than seeing going to Britain as a good thing, he makes a case for showing that there are several disadvantages to moving to Britain, notably less money and less freedom to do what he wants. However, having adopted that position, he then shifts back, recounting how money was never an important issue for either him or his wife in the past. But again the tables are turned as Dave mentions the spending power to which they have grown accustomed. His final position on the issue of money is one that undermines his decision to go back to the UK, leaving him nervous and unsure that this is the right course of action.

Similar pendulum swings of position-taking occur as Dave contrasts himself with 'other people who are going on the academic line, who are doing things to climb the ladder of academic success'. In fact, judging from Dave's earlier accounts of the qualifications he has obtained, his activity at conferences and in teachers' groups, and indeed the fact that he is actually applying for academic jobs in Britain, it would appear that Dave also does these things. However, at this point, he describes himself as someone who 'potters', who engages in professional and academic activities because they are intrinsically interesting to him, rather than because they will bolster his position on the 'ladder of academic success'. Dave defines himself here as a

‘teacher educator and researcher’, although this is surely a projection of what he wants to be rather than what he has been doing over the past seven years in Japan. But he asserts a moral high ground by splitting that category into those who do things to improve their own working practice, and those who do those things to impress others. Thus, Dave may not get a job, but he has done the right things for the right motives.

When I challenge the version of Dave as unambitious and not career-oriented, he concedes and suddenly becomes more open about the concerns that are preoccupying him on that particular day, writing his CV and applying for a job. The final opposition that he constructs is between ‘teachers and people who work for universities’ whom he has met face-to-face and with whom he feels comfortable that he can hold his own, and people at universities who will judge him only on the merits he can display on paper. Thus, he is confident enough to suggest that after five hours of interviewing, I regard him as a ‘good bloke’, but he lacks any confidence that his CV has the power to impress in the same way.

5.5. Dana: not real teaching

Dana belongs to the third category of teachers, that is people who work part-time usually at several universities. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there are some obvious similarities between the life histories of members of this group and those in the category of foreign teachers. Dave, who belongs to the higher status category of full-time teachers, like Dana, started teaching as a way to escape an unsatisfactory job situation. Moreover, Dave also seems to have had little affiliation to a teaching career in his early work history. His career involved several changes from times when he taught merely to support his sporting ambition, to other times when he abandoned

teaching altogether. In terms of what they do, Dave has the better job, having a full-time contract position, as opposed to Dana who has a number of part-time jobs at different universities and vocational colleges. But like Dave, Dana also takes pride in her work, enjoying her popularity with students and devoting much time to developing her course syllabi and materials. The major difference between the two is that Dave maintains an ambition to continue working in ELT, hopefully in Britain at a higher level than he has done in Japan. Dana, as I shall show, positions herself in such a way as to reject a career identity as a teacher. Although many ex-pats come to teaching by accident, some like Dana continue to think of it as nothing more than a convenient way to support more valued activities.

In the following extract from the final interview, Dana continues a discussion of her role as a teacher at various universities in Japan:

Dana (3) pp2-3

Do you think that your teaching is effective?

Effective? You know what, frankly, I don't think any teacher in Asia is effective, I really don't .. I hope it doesn't sound terribly racist but I think the expectation of education in Asia is completely different from the expectation than what I'm accustomed to from a western university. And so I'm not sure ... I'm not sure there's supposed to be any effectiveness. No one's checking, no one at any of the universities I teach at is checking to see if these students if they met a standard.

There is no standard. I as an instructor am not given this standard saying this is the

expectation for Year 1 students, this is the expectation for Year 2 students, this is what they're expected to be able to do when they get out of your class. Whereas, like I say, if you study German 1, there's an expectation that you've mastered these particular things and you'll be tested on these things at the end of the year, and if you can't do these things, then it's back to square one, you can't go into German 2. That's not here, there's none of that. So I'm not sure what, so I think my expectations have changed in that way, so I make my own expectations. I do expect students to try. But I'm not sure what you can achieve in ninety minutes a week, and it's an extremely abbreviated term, like now I'm very happy about it, but I really do think that Asian universities at the moment don't really meet university standards. You know there aren't any Asian universities that are in the top ten world universities that people are rushing out to go to. I have a friend, a Japanese friend, who's a writer, and he went to Keio and he dropped out of Keio because he said he went to his first class with this *really well-known* Japanese philosopher and the first day there were about sixty people there, and he thought OK, there might be some exciting discussion, and the second day there were only three people there, you know, because they didn't have to come, and he said it was so disappointing and this guy just stood there and lectured, and as an intellectual it was just not what he was expecting. So he dropped out and went to some low-down crap American university you know just for the intellectual engagement. [yeah, yeah] So I think that's, I don't think of myself as a *real* teacher because of where I teach and how I teach. I don't think I'm not capable of being a real teacher, I think I *can* teach, and I think I have an expectation and the material that I ask of students is equal to if not superior to what other teachers in Japan are doing. I take it a lot more seriously than most of my counterparts. But I

don't take it *that* seriously. I do think it's a real problem in Japan, if not in Asia, I shouldn't talk for Asia but that's my awareness.

Mm, yeah. So where do you see yourself going? Do you see yourself staying?

Well, we go back and forth between wanting to go home and wanting to go elsewhere, and then my thinking, why on earth would we want to go anywhere? I'm in the middle of a ten-week holiday you know where I have time to pursue very *very* seriously .. *my* areas of interest and ... I don't think I could match that anywhere else. So again it's opportunistic ... it's convenient for me personally. It doesn't get any better than this in terms of how much effort you have to put in at school, how many people are hovering over your shoulder watching you which is none .. so overall these become good factors *in your life*, you know that there's not a lot of pressure, there's not a lot of expectation, you have a lot of free time as a part-timer. So those are all good things, you know, I couldn't match that elsewhere. But at the same time, you know, Japan makes you a little crazy.

This is the point in the three interviews where Dana most clearly and strongly expresses her lack of affiliation with an identity of being a language teacher in Japanese higher education, although there are several instances earlier in the transcripts where a similar position can be detected. Significantly, maintaining an affiliation with a teacher identity would perhaps be more natural, since she is interpellated (Althusser, 1971), or positioned by me as belonging to the category of language teachers simply by virtue of being invited to take part in this study.

In fact, in the second interview particularly, Dana is fairly confident in constructing an identity as a 'good teacher'. She works out clear syllabuses, based on a framework of Presentation, Practice and Performance (PPP), which she learnt in her first teaching job and which she has found to be an effective way of structuring her university lesson plans. She is constantly searching for new ideas, particularly games and short activities, to use in her classes, and she discusses her ideas and any teaching problems with her husband, a qualified teacher who also teaches part-time in higher education. The teacher identity she constructs is not a position that Dana seems prepared to relinquish altogether in this narrative. As she says, 'I think I *can* teach, and I think I have an expectation and the material that I ask of students is equal to if not superior to what other teachers in Japan are doing.' However, in this narrative she constructs two opposing membership categories, 'Asian' and 'Western' educational culture. Because she sees herself belonging to the Western category - indeed she is a product of that system - she believes she has an entirely different and, probably, superior set of beliefs about what education should entail. The purpose of constructing such stereotyped positions is to justify her lack of commitment to the work that she does as a teacher.

In this extract, Dana starts by constructing an argument to explain why she (or anyone else) is unable to teach effectively in Japan. Coming from an educational system where she claims that the content of educational courses is rigorously standardised, the Japanese, indeed all Asian universities are found wanting in failing to provide clear goals or expectations of their instructors or their students. The word 'instructor' warrants a mention: Dana usually refers to herself as belonging to a category of 'part-time' teachers. Here, however, the use of the word 'instructor' maybe refers back to a

previous membership category to which Dana belonged working in *eikaiwa* schools.

At her first school, a very strict curriculum was set by the administration, with checks on students and teachers to ensure adherence. Her experience at these commercial language schools, as well as of schools in the United States provides her with a set of expectations about the role of universities. In her schema, educators and educational institutions are supposed to standardise courses and ensure that the curricular goals are being met. Because they do not operate in the way she expects, Dana concludes that the Japanese education system as a whole places its priority on 'form' or appearance over 'function' or effectiveness, a view wholly in accordance with McVeigh's (2002) argument of Japanese education as a 'simulacrum'. Although she acts like a teacher (and a good one at that) and is taken by others to be a teacher, she does not consider this identity to be 'real'.

The main tenet of Dana's argument depends on an acceptance that Asian and Western cultures are essentially different. Dana is acutely aware of the dangers of being perceived as a racist in representing other cultures ('I hope it doesn't sound terribly racist but ...'). Throughout the interviews, in fact, there are narratives devoted to presenting herself as a non-racist. She recounts, for example, an argument with another teacher, who labeled the US as perpetuating a kind of racism that was similar to South African apartheid. On another occasion, she talks about the awkwardness of her family relationships: her father, a German immigrant to the US, belonged to the Hitler Youth as a child, while Dana married a Jew after completing her university degree in Los Angeles. Elsewhere, she talks about her childhood in California and the relatively liberal attitude toward race that exists in that state. Finally, she discusses Americans' changing attitudes towards the outside world as a result of 9/11. In this

narrative, however, Dana skates on thin ice in using a negative representation of Japanese educational culture as her justification for her lack of commitment to it. Through an examination of the membership categories that she constructs, we can see how she tries to avoid being positioned as a racist.

In supporting this position, she draws on various sources apart from her own experiences: the absence of Asian universities among the top ten in the world, and most tellingly, the vicarious experience of a friend ('a *Japanese* friend') at one of the most prestigious private universities in Japan. There is a subtle shift or overlap of membership categories here. On the one hand, the friend is Japanese, and thus belongs automatically to the category of Other which Dana cannot belong to. But at the same time, he is a friend, a writer and an intellectual, the latter two being identities which Dana has at various points used in her own self-representation and these attributes emphasise the friend's trustworthiness as an informed and legitimate critic of the Japanese system.

This first section of Dana's narrative here has been an exercise in constructing a membership category, which is unsatisfactory for many reasons that she provides. Positioning herself as an American in Asia, she claims that the values and expectations about what an education should entail are totally foreign to the Japanese system. Since her values and expectations are thus bound to be unfulfilled, a teaching identity in the Japanese context is inevitably unsatisfactory. On the other hand, what she regards as impediments to being a teacher, are advantages to 'my areas of interest', that is her ambition to become a writer. A revealing comparison might be drawn here between Dana and Dave both of whom talk about the 'freedom' for

teachers in Japanese higher education. For Dave, the positive advantage of this is that it is freedom to teach. For Dana, however, freedom in teaching means lack of standards or goals, and hence is no advantage at all. Where she does see it as beneficial, it is simply the freedom to devote her time and energy to something else.

5.6. Careers, age and families

At the beginning of this chapter I presented two definitions of career: a life trajectory and occupation. The notion of membership categories that I have been employing in this analysis supports the second definition of a career, as a particular occupation; however, comparing and contrasting the three teachers, it is the first definition, namely a life trajectory which is more salient. Indeed, in examining teachers' career paths and career identities, the factor of their age is vitally important.

Harumi and Dave are approximately the same age, thus for them, the question of changing careers, of retraining to do something different having invested so much into their teaching and academic careers, is largely moot. Certainly, for Harumi, the question of doing anything different does not arise at all. Looking back to her younger days, there were alternative career paths that she could have taken (school teacher or company employee), but even then, her story supports the choice she did take as the most natural and appropriate for her (her desire to teach from early childhood, her love of phonetics, her success in school and university). Dave, by contrast, had worked in different occupations. However, he has also made a considerable investment in his teaching career, both in terms of time and in his efforts to obtain various academic and teaching qualifications. The value that he feels he has accrued thereby motivates him to apply for highly competitive jobs in the UK, rather than

starting out in a new venture. Dana, by contrast, is more than ten years younger than Harumi and Dave. With far less invested in her teaching career, she is relatively far freer to change and do something else. Moreover, similar to Dave's sporting ambition before he had children, Dana nurtures an ambition to do become a writer, a career that is far more risky and far less financially remunerative, and thus, her teaching is merely a means of supporting this more competitive aspiration.

The factor of age also relates to the teachers' family relationships. Harumi mentions that being a single woman has made it easier for her to get on in her career than for many men at the same stage in their lives and careers who would need to support families. However, as I mentioned in the analysis, what Harumi sees here as an advantage to her career could be seen as a limitation on her personal life, since gender roles may make it more difficult for her to pursue a family life and a career as a professional academic at the same time.

Dave, indeed, is in the position that Harumi describes of being a man with a wife and children to support, and this leads him to make choices that are not necessarily advantageous to his personal ambitions and inclinations. For instance, in another part of the interview, Dave states that he moved back to Japan from the UK because of problems in his wife's family and this meant leaving a job that he enjoyed working in sports promotion. In the extract presented above, it is also family needs that have motivated him to apply for jobs outside of Japan.

Family positioning also helps explain Dana's attitude towards her work. Like Dave ten years previously, she is married without children. Both she and her husband teach,

giving them a great deal of freedom in terms of both time and money to enjoy other interests (for example, travel and writing). Nevertheless, this is seen as a temporary situation for them ('we go back and forth between wanting to go home and wanting to go elsewhere'). The opportunities offered to them in Japan may lead to a more permanent investment in a life and career in that country or alternatively they may lead them to satisfy their *wanderlust* and settle down in their 'home' town of Los Angeles.

5.7. Positioning, field and commitment

As we have seen, a cursory examination of the career biographies shows that teachers occupy quite different positions in terms of status, and this probably has a strong bearing on how they view their professional identity. One way to think about careers from the perspective of social status or power is to use Bourdieu's concept of 'field' (1984; 1990; 1993).

Field is a way of describing social practices as relational structures within which capital, either economic or symbolic, or both, is unequally distributed. From this perspective, the fact that all three teachers are engaged in the same practice (nominally) at institutions of higher education in Japan puts them all in the same field. Bourdieu's concept serves to turn our attention away from the variables and to focus instead on the ways in which the structure of the field tends to be reproduced. We can see glimpses of this, for example, in the way that the three older Japanese teachers were all appointed to tenured posts through the recommendation of former professors at the universities where they were undergraduates.

The field then is a strictly relational social structure. Harumi is at a higher position within this structure than either Dave or Dana. However, although her position there may appear more secure and stable, she belongs to a department that competes with other departments within the university for power and funding, and the university itself, at this time of economic change and reform, must also compete with other institutions to win students and funding. Moreover, as Japan's domestic catchment of students shrinks along with the declining birth rate, institutions are beginning to look overseas to keep up levels of student enrollment. Higher education is thus increasingly becoming a global market, and Japanese higher education must compete on an international level.

Dave and particularly Dana are on the edges of the field of Japanese higher education. As a part-time teacher at several universities, Dana has little contact with full-time faculty and no sense of personal obligation or commitment to the institutions that employ her. Dave had been in a position that was scarcely more secure about a decade earlier, but, subsequent to his appointment to his current post, which he describes as a lucky fluke, he has invested in professional development, by taking a second masters in TESP and subsequently enrolling on a distance doctoral program at a British university. Dana's refusal to invest in a career in EFL is reflected in the defensive positions she asserts in her talk about work.

The marginal position of teachers such as Dave and Dana is particularly apparent in the contractual relationship that they have with their employers. Dave's position is perhaps more ambivalent, since his job is paid at a rate that is at least as high, if not higher, than that of tenured faculty. Marginality, however, is not merely lack of access

to material benefits. In this respect, Hiro, one of the Japanese teachers expresses some dissatisfaction with his job, as a language teacher in the Faculty of Law. In a revealing anecdote, he describes a discussion with colleagues about the size and layout of classrooms in a new building. Hiro preferred smaller classrooms with movable seats. The law professors, however, thought that large rooms with fixed seats were more appropriate to the lecture-style that they traditionally practiced. The law professors carried more weight and the classrooms were built according to their wishes. This is also about access to material resources. This kind of marginalisation has been observed by researchers of both EFL (Johnston, 1997; 1999) and ESL (e.g. Belcher & Braine, 1995; Johns, 1997; Zamel, 1998).

Bourdieu's notion of field highlights the dynamic of power and access to capital in social relations. However, his theory is also relevant to understanding the effect on the individual of this kind of dynamic. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Bourdieu conducts an analysis of Gustave Flaubert's *A Sentimental education*, a novel about a callow young man whose half-hearted attempts at a series of careers are depicted against a backdrop of the social upheaval of the French Revolution. Bourdieu's interpretation of this tale is that the failure of Flaubert's protagonist is not due to any social injustice or impediment, since Frederick's social position would enable him entry to any number of careers, but rather it is the result of his failure to commit himself to any one field.

Similar to commitment, the notion of investment has been examined by Norton in her studies of identity in language learners (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997; 2001).

Norton explains that 'the notion of investment [...] conceives of the language learner

as having a complex social history and multiple desires, [... and] that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world' (Norton, 2001, p10-11). In much the same way, the varying levels of commitment that are expressed by the teachers in this study can be seen as the varying degrees to which they are prepared to invest in a particular identity.

Thus, of the three teachers examined in this chapter, Harumi has a far greater investment judging not only from the time and energy that she is prepared to devote to her work, but also in terms of the identity that she derives from it. As we saw in her narrative, the misunderstanding that arose over the significance of being a woman in academia in Japan was because I had seen a conflict of identity that Harumi was not prepared to entertain. Being an academic is the most important identity for her, such that other salient identities which could present conflicting roles or positions are seen to be insignificant or even, as in this case, turned to her advantage ('... I didn't really feel that because I was a woman I, it was more difficult than for men. Maybe it's easier for a woman actually'). Note here the contrast with the position expressed by Dave. Dave starts this narrative by positioning himself as a 'family man' and thus it is in these terms – i.e. for the sake of his children's education - that his decision to move back to the UK should be understood. However, when challenged with a different version of his identity ('*But you are active, you're very active going to conferences, giving presentations?*') he shifts to another position, conceding that generally he is motivated to gain experiences in and outside work that 'might be useful to improve me as a teacher educator or researcher'. Dave's ambivalence about his position is

essentially caused by what he admits is a lack of confidence, an anxiety that his investment in the teacher educator and researcher identity may not pay off.

5.8. Slippery identities

Dave's defensiveness about his true ambition leads him to downplay one potential identity position as a teacher educator and researcher in favour of another, that of a family man first and foremost. It is useful however to remember that the professional identity that was being investigated and that Dave confidently presented most of the time was neither of these, but that of EFL teacher in a Japanese university.

A similar tendency to downplay a professional identity can be observed also in Dana's case. Dana is probably sensitive to the prevailing discourse of professionalisation, (not least because of the way she is positioned in these interviews) according to which her standing as a professional teacher could be undermined. Despite Thornbury's (2002) case in defence of 'backpacker' teachers, the majority view appears to be that personality and enthusiasm are not in themselves sufficient for good teaching. Dana is precisely the kind of teacher that Thornbury would appear to have in mind. She arrived in Japan with no teaching qualification or experience, but, as she says, she was 'an instant success' at her first job at an *eikaiwa* conversation school, and 'teaching clicked with (her) personality'. Dana herself claims in the narrative extract presented in this chapter that she does not think of herself as a '*real* teacher'. This, however, is not because she lacks professionalism, but rather because, in her experience, there are no professional standards or goals for teachers and students to comply with. By denying the 'real-ness' of what she does,

she makes an emphatic moral statement about the entire higher education system, not merely of Japan but of the whole of Asia.

Dana is not the only teacher to construct positions that revolve around a notion of real and unreal. In the passage that was analysed, Dave also constructs a moral divide between people who engage in teacher development activities and qualifications purely for the sake of their CV, and those (like himself) who do so out of a genuine concern to improve his teaching practice. Teacher development, as is clear from the position that Dave asserts, benefits students first and foremost, and although he fears that having made this his priority he is now at a disadvantage as a job-seeker, he retains a moral high ground, at least in the context of the interview (See Widdicombe, 1998, Harre & van Langenhove, 1999).

Discursive identities, as is shown in all three examples, are extremely slippery (cf Swales's (1990) description of 'genre'). In the narratives in this chapter, this slipperiness is manifested in different ways, with differing motives behind them. One of the difficulties entails the subtle but important differences that might exist between two people's schema of purportedly the same membership category. This is illustrated in the case of Harumi, where her depiction of the likely difficulties in the early stages of a typical Japanese academic career leads to a misunderstanding on my part. As we saw in Chapter Two, Goffman (1959) refers to the importance of a working consensus in maintaining social identities, and in this instance, it suddenly becomes clear after my chance request for clarification (*'is that something that makes it particularly difficult for women? To have a career in academia?'*) that Harumi and I are not reading from the same song sheet. In this particular instance, my question exposes

the misunderstanding, and Harumi finds herself placed in a position that she did not intend and from which she spends the next stretch of talk trying to extricate herself. The problem is, however, how do we know when the speaker's understanding of a particular identity diverges from our own? Clearly, if it is contested, then the schema becomes more clearly defined through dialogue (Hermans & Hermans Jansen, 1995). But if, as in this case, dialogue is kept to a minimum and the emphasis is on the teacher's account and rendition, interpretation of schemata is always open to doubt.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways teachers represent their career identities. The most important findings of the analysis are:

- Teachers represented their career identities both in terms of their affiliation with particular occupations (e.g. Harumi with academics, Dave with professional language teachers and teacher educators) and their rejection of other possible occupations (e.g. Harumi and school teaching or working for a company, Dana and academia). As can be seen in the examples of Harumi and Dana, the ways teachers represent their professional identity can be diametrically opposed (i.e. academic, intellectual/non-academic, practical).
- The way people choose to present their career identity appears to be influenced by their relative position or status within the field of higher education in Japan, as evidenced by their contractual status or by the importance of their subject to the institution.

- Commitment to a career identity emerges in the positions the teachers adopt in their narratives. The less committed or confident they feel, the more likely they are to downplay or deny an affiliation with a particular professional category, and to emphasise the importance of other occupations (such as writing in the cases of Dana and Maiko) or other areas of their lives (such as family, in the case of Dave).
- This notion of commitment allows us to see a significant difference in the professional affiliations expressed by Harumi and Dave, both of whom are strongly committed to their careers. Harumi's professional affiliation is tightly bound up with the university where she has spent her career (except for her two wilderness years of part-time teaching and her one-year masters in London). Dave, by contrast, is not bound to any particular institution or group of people. As a professional teacher, or teacher educator, he wants to believe that he is free to move and work anywhere.

The notion of commitment links to the subject of the following chapter in which I examine the identity positions of two ex-pat teachers with regard to their working practices and their standing in their respective academic communities.

CHAPTER SIX

POSITIONS OF EXPERTISE

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at EFL as a career for Japanese and non-Japanese university teachers. Whereas that chapter addressed the working lives of teachers, in this chapter I consider their teaching practices, the stories they tell of the classroom, of students and colleagues. Through these stories, I wish to revisit theories of expertise and will argue that expertise is defined not merely by a practitioner's particular skill and attitude towards what they do, but also by how they and others value what they do. From that perspective, expertise is a social and political phenomenon as much as it is a practical or psychological one, and as such, this has important implications in particular for foreign teachers. In this chapter, I investigate the way two ex-pat teachers represent their own teaching practice. I have chosen to focus on ex-pat teachers, not because I think that they are more or less expert than Japanese teachers of English, but because the fact that they are foreign throws into sharper relief the importance of the teacher's position within the university community and that teacher's perception of being an insider or outsider.

The two teachers I have selected for this close study are Jane and Dave, both highly qualified, experienced language teachers, who are employed in similar posts at different universities. Although both might be described as expert teachers, their respective experiences are substantially different. Jane believes that her expertise is not valued appropriately and feels unable to teach to the standard that she would like. Dave, on the other hand, does feel that his expertise is recognised and that there are opportunities at work for further teacher development. Through their narratives, I

examine the ways they identify with or feel excluded from communities at work. I will show that expertise does not solely depend on individual knowledge, skill or performance, but on their capacity to negotiate with others in their work communities and to have their voices heard.

6.2. Defining Expertise

As we have seen in Chapter One, literature in teacher education and teacher knowledge has tended to focus on expertise from a behavioural or psychological perspective (e.g. Atkinson & Claxton, 2000; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Eraut, 2000; Schon, 1983). Such approaches attend to distinguishing between experts and non-experts (Tsui, 2003; Woods, 1996), analysing what experts do when they perform (Claxton, 2000; Eraut, 2000; Schon, 1983; 1991) and what attitude they take generally towards the activity in which they excel (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993).

In her summary of this body of research, and from her own case studies of four teachers at a Hong Kong secondary school, Tsui (2003) identifies three main characteristics of expertise in teaching:

- 1) Experts succeed in integrating aspects of teacher knowledge, for example, knowledge of the curriculum or of wider social matters help shape their teaching practice.
- 2) They relate to specific contexts and “situated possibilities”.

3) They are able to theorise practical knowledge and practicalise theoretical knowledge.

In addition to these, Tsui proposes that expertise is a particular attitude or disposition toward critical self-reflection, or as Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) term it, 'progressive problem solving'. Finally, she argues that expertise is 'multiple' and 'distributed', that is, it exists within social groups or communities, and individuals can draw on and benefit from knowledge and practices of expert members of their community of practice.

This final point opens the door to a social analysis of expertise, although Tsui herself does not take this route. A social perspective, however, suggests different kinds of questions. Rather than focusing on what individual practitioners do, we need to look at the context of their practice: How do others respond to what they do? How do they relate to or fit in with their community of practice? In other words, these questions are related to social identity or position.

Although not normally cited in teacher education and teacher knowledge, Rampton (1990; 1995) provides a different definition of expertise that stems from a more socially oriented perspective:

1) Although they often do, experts do not have to feel close to what they know a lot about. Expertise is different from identification.

2) Expertise is learned, not fixed or innate.

3) Expertise is relative. One person's expert is another person's fool.

4) Expertise is partial. People can be expert in several fields, but they are never omniscient.

5) To achieve expertise, one goes through processes of certification, in which one is judged by other people. Their standards of assessment can be reviewed and disputed. There is also a healthy tradition of challenging 'experts' (1990, pp.98-99).

Rampton's definition is constructed to support arguments concerning the linguistic identity of language teachers (1990) and ethnic minority students (1995), and the first two points appear to relate specifically to that purpose. The last three points, however, can be more readily applied to a conceptualisation of expertise generally.

To define expertise as relative, partial and subject to official recognition or approval is to see it as a fundamentally political phenomenon. A useful insight into this is provided by Giddens (1990) who argues that 'expert systems', which he identifies as one of the most salient characteristics of modern life, are inherently fragile. In our daily lives, we are obliged to put our trust in a whole range of expert systems, but such systems always face obsolescence as better, or sometimes just newer, systems come along to take their place. English teaching can also be seen in this light.

Teachers may strive to keep up-to-date in their teaching practices and knowledge, but there is still the risk that what they do, or even what they are (i.e. native speaker, non-

native speaker, under or over a certain age, holder of particular qualifications or not), may be considered unnecessary by the institution for which they work, or by a higher level of power, such as the Ministry of education.

A final way of defining expertise is phenomenological, that is, seen from the point of view of practising teachers, an approach that has been explored by Connelly and Clandinin (1988; 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). From an initial cognitive concept of personal practical knowledge (1988), Clandinin and Connelly have moved to a view in which ‘stories’ take center stage. Teachers’ stories are seen as vehicles which pull together teacher knowledge and identity and the context in which they teach. In contrast with discourse, which tends to deny ownership to people of the language they have for their own experiences, and obscures the connection between the personal and the social, the concept of stories gives more weight to agency, or to the individual storyteller. It is up to the story-teller to decide whether to relate stories that reveal experiences, ideas and beliefs that run contrary to official discourses or stories, or not. Clandinin and Connelly use a metaphor of ‘landscapes’ to depict both teachers’ knowledge and beliefs and the social context in which those knowledge and beliefs are articulated. Continuing the spatial metaphor, they differentiate between ‘in-classroom places’, where teachers enact their personal, practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and from which they derive their ‘teacher stories’, and ‘out-of-classroom places’ where they come up against others’ prescriptions and expectations about what is right and proper.

When teachers move out of their classrooms onto the out-of-classroom place on the landscape, they often live and tell cover stories, stories in which they portray

themselves as experts [...] Cover stories enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalised by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.3).

This notion of cover stories draws attention to the fact that expertise is to some extent a construction, a version of a story that is likely to find approval in places that matter. The teachers and administrators in Clandinin and Connelly's studies often feel under pressure in the changing professional landscapes in which they work, and are helped by the presence of 'safe places' in which they can tell their teacher stories and can reflect on how or whether to bridge the gap between their teacher stories and cover stories. This notion of expertise has much in common with theories about discourse and discourse communities, as was discussed in Chapter One. Expertise, like discourse, is a powerful way of doing or saying things, sanctioned and promoted by a powerful community, such as a school or a university.

To sum up, whereas psychological approaches tend to regard expertise as an essential or absolute quality, social approaches are more relativistic, seeing it instead as a kind of practice that competes with other practices in a social, and hence political, environment. Expertise, seen from a social perspective, is a value-laden term, and as such, recognition of expertise says as much about the people who uphold such values as it does about the expert who is thus recognised.

6.3. Assuming expertise

Taking a social perspective, as I have done, means adopting a relativistic, or at least open-minded, view of expertise. Unlike Tsui's study (2003), I have not ranked the

teachers in my study on a scale of expertise; but neither have I avoided the term altogether, as do Connelly and Clandinin (1999). Instead, in this chapter I treat two teachers, Jane and Dave, as experts, without seeking to view one as more expert than the other, or to deny the claims that they make about their own expertise.

There are a number of reasons for taking this kind of approach. Firstly, the teachers in the study both occupy the same institutional position of foreign lecturer (*gaikokujin kyakuin kyoshi*), albeit at different national universities. Universities in Japan appoint teachers on the basis of some kind of expertise, as attested to by academic qualifications, experience teaching at the same level, and/or by recommendation of a known and trusted authority. Both Jane and Dave were appointed on the basis of masters degrees and several years experience teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language. In addition, both were recommended to the university by 'insiders'. Subsequently, both have worked in the same position for some years - Jane more than ten, and Dave, seven - time enough perhaps to feel established and confident in their practice.

A second reason for proceeding from an assumption that these teachers are experts is methodological (see Chapter Three). By positioning the teachers as experts in the interviews, what they do and say is recognised as authoritative, and that authority empowers them to tell their stories in their own way and to justify what they do in terms of pedagogical or moral rightness. The stories they tell might also be 'cover stories', but they are likely to be idealised versions of their own practices, rather than someone else's. The advantage of this is to see how they construct versions of

expertise within a particular context, and how that context serves either to support or conflict with the practices that they try to implement and develop.

My investigation of expertise is organised around the following three questions:

1) How do they describe their area of expertise? How did they acquire this expertise? How is their expertise recognised by others?

2) What alternative expert practices are recognised in their universities? How are they represented in the teachers' discourse?

3) How does the social educational context constrain or provide opportunities for developing their expertise?

6.4. Accreditation and recognition

In terms of qualifications in their field, Jane and Dave are roughly equivalent. Jane has a masters degree in TESOL from a university in Canada and had worked on a doctorate in comparative literature, which she did not complete. Dave also has a masters in TESOL, and at the time of the study, was in his third year of a doctorate in education at a British university. The way they present their qualifications, however, is strikingly different. For Jane, her expertise is bound up with a period which she considers 'the golden era' of her working life, an experience which stands as a yardstick by which she measures her current working life and finds it sadly wanting. Dave, by contrast, sees his expertise as rooted in and developing out of his experiences in the classroom and in 'talking shop' with other teachers in Japan. As we

saw in the previous chapter, he worries that his CV does not adequately represent his true abilities. However, unlike Jane, Dave is confident that his expertise is recognised both by his students and by many of his colleagues.

6.4.1. Jane's golden era of teaching

The high point of Jane's career, which describes as 'the golden era' of teaching career, was when she founded and co-directed an adult immigrant education center in Montreal. Jane description of this stage in her career is crucial to her construction of herself as an expert language teacher. Although she already had a teaching qualification, and experience of teaching high school in Canada, a *gymnasium* in Austria and a Japanese kindergarten and American international school in Poland, it was at this stage that she embarked on a masters degree in TESL at a university in Montreal, which she claims 'had an excellent TESL center, actually the best TESL center in Canada'. In the following extract she describes her association with the University of Concordia:

Jane (1) p. 14

So at that time with my first husband, the TESL center was right next to his art gallery, so I'd drop my son off, take my courses and I learned a lot. There were fantastic teachers: Lightbown, who's like number one in language acquisition, just a great, great group of professors there. So I did the MA in teaching and Applied Linguistics.[...] So I had started also teaching part-time as a lecturer at the TESL center University of Concordia, teaching methodology and also I became very much involved in, well, I was doing courses where I had to do teacher training, I

don't like to call it training, teacher education, and this was helping people ... become teachers basically. And also working as a master teacher. I think I had about twenty or thirty different students come into my classrooms, over long periods, and I had to watch them and give advice and so on. I became very much interested in teacher education.

Here, Jane prepares the ground for her alignment with a group of experts ('There were fantastic teachers: Lightbown who's like number one in language acquisition, just a great, great group of professors there'). A few sentences later, she positions herself as part of this illustrious community ('I had started also teaching part-time as a lecturer'). Describing her job as a 'master teacher', she also adds to the status of her role by terming it 'teacher education' rather than 'teacher training' which has more lowly connotations of technical skill as opposed to professional knowledge.

Later, in the final interview, Jane returns to the subject of the academic community to which she had belonged and which made such an impression on her:

Jane (3) p.11

I think one of the biggest influences was in Montreal when I decided to veer away from literature and get to something practical which was teaching English as a Second Language. That was the TESL center at Concordia. They were excellent teachers, great people, some of them became my closest friends, they visit me here, we keep in contact. They really taught me a lot, they all love teaching English as a Second Language, they were all really great scholars and involved in

community work and helping people, whatever. I think the TESL Center at Concordia was really important.

In this passage, again Jane constructs a membership category to which she attaches herself implicitly. Although she no longer works with these people, 'some of them became my closest friends, they visit me here, we keep in contact'. In this passage also we can also see those features of English teaching that Jane considers to be fundamental to good practice: English teaching has to be 'practical', teachers should 'love' what they do, they should be good scholars, as well as being involved in community work. Indeed, this characterises very accurately Jane's account of her work at the adult immigrant center:

Jane (1) p.13

... It was the golden age ... because you felt that the language you were teaching, it was not like finishing school, it was something that people could use and they needed. I'm not trying to say that this was an act of *charity*, you know, some kind of colonial attitude where you're helping the poor, there, you're the white .. you know, native speaker helping. It wasn't that at all, it was that you were really helping people. Not all. Some, as I said the Hong Kong ladies, the Koreans, they were coming in with mink coats. They needed it for other reasons. They needed it to get out of the house and go out into the community, but anyway they needed it. But in many cases you were helping people that had had horrific experiences: swimming across alligator-infested rivers in Cambodia, you know. And they really, really needed the language and they wanted to help themselves. And they

really appreciated you a lot. And I had complete free rein to develop the program as I liked. With cultural excursions, materials, textbooks, really anything we wanted. We had to stay kind of within the guidelines of what the government, you had to teach them a little bit of math every day, like 5 minutes. And you had to have some books for literacy type teaching reading. But basically you could work around that. So as long as they were getting the language. The teaching staff was fantastic. That was another thing that made it a golden age, you know.... everybody was pulling together to make this center work. There were small cliques of course, but generally speaking, people were working together. They felt a personal responsibility to get the program going. They used to fight a bit with the administration but in the end, everybody pulled together .. it's still running.

What is interesting about the membership category construction that occurs at the start of this passage is the pains that Jane goes to in order to avoid possible misunderstandings of her goals and her role at the center. For example, she insists that it was not 'finishing school', which would suggest that the students already had everything they needed and that the Center was therefore a form of extravagance. Nor was it an 'act of charity' which conjures up, to Jane, images of rich white colonialists offering aid to impoverished natives. What made the teaching experience so satisfying was being of practical service to people who needed and wanted and appreciated her help. So too was the sense of shared purpose and responsibility among the teaching staff. These features, as we shall see, could be the polar opposite of her experience of teaching in Japan.

Again, as we shall see, there are significant parallels in her relations with authorities between the Canadian and Japanese settings. In Canada, as can be seen in this extract, she has certain obligations to teach literacy and numeracy, but these are obligations that she barely meets, taking advantage of the free rein she had to develop the program as she wanted to. Although she hints at some dissent among the teachers, she claims that the teaching staff was united in a common effort to 'make this center work'. Thus in the Canadian context, she has a position of considerable authority where her way prevails, even to the extent of bending government guidelines and even where other teachers may have disagreed with her. Her authority as an expert teacher in Canada is attested to by her students ('they really appreciated you a lot'), by the university where she worked as a part-time lecturer and for whom she took in students as a 'master teacher', as well as by the government authorities who employed her to run the center and the teachers who shared her commitment to make the center a success.

Jane moved to Japan from Canada because of a chance opportunity: a Japanese university had come to Montreal recruiting experts to teach communicative language teaching methods to trainee teachers, and Jane was more than sufficiently qualified for this position. The job, however, did not live up to her expectations:

Jane (1) p.15

I started teaching at M University, which is the largest private university in Japan. Which was good in the sense that the benefits were very good. The teaching itself was not very good. The classes were up to sixty students, you met the students

once a week. This was drip-feeding, I call it. You don't learn a language in a class of sixty to eighty students. [...] I had no leeway about how to teach, it was set for you. I said, I'm going back. We went back to Canada, were there for about half a year, and I said, you know what, this is so boring here (laughs) So I got another phone call, again around 2 am, this was from Bob G from N University. And he said, hey, somebody just left and they're looking for an American, and they're looking for an American woman, and we need to have a token woman here. Hurry up and send your CV and publications, and fortunately I had met a couple of people here in the department so there were personal links. I think there were a couple of candidates, but because of the publications and so on and that I had taught in Japan already. So we were back over in Japan.

Jane's reason for deciding a second time to leave Canada for Japan strikes an odd note in the context of her otherwise constant adulation of her experience at the Adult Immigrant Center in Canada and denigration of her work in Japan. On the other hand, the way in which she was appointed sets the scene for her subsequent stories which paint that university in the blackest possible light. Although her publications, previous experience teaching in Japan, and personal links with people at the university seem to have clinched the post, her suitability for the job, as it is ascribed to the university, lies in her identity as an American woman, as much if not more than as an expert language teacher. This is the root of Jane's dissatisfaction with her job, as we shall see below.

6.4.2. Dave's apprehensions

Like Jane, Dave also presents himself as an expert teacher of ESL/EFL. There are two prominent differences between the two: First is the fact that, although Dave has worked most of his life teaching English in Japan, this was not his first choice of career. As we saw in the previous chapter, family reasons brought him back to Japan. It is only in the last seven years that Dave has seriously committed himself to a career in ELT. Secondly, whereas Jane had moved from an English speaking country to Japan, a move that she does not regard as positive in the professional or career sense, Dave was at the time of the interviews applying for lectureships in ELT and Applied Linguistics back in the UK, about which he felt somewhat uneasy. In other words, this circumstance may have propelled him to give a more confident account of what he does in Japan, in the face of an unknown future applying for jobs in the UK.

Dave does present some similarities to Jane in the way he presents his appointment to the job. Like her, he gives the impression that the university did not care too much about his qualifications or expertise as a language teacher. Indeed, Dave undermines his own fitness for the job, stressing the arbitrary nature of his appointment:

Dave (2) pp.2-3

I got a job fairly quickly at W University through a colleague at L Language School. At that time, ten years ago relatively few people in the school had masters degrees .. it's probably different now, but I was one of the few I think that had a masters degree even though it wasn't language related, it was sports psychology,

but it was OK to get a job in university.[...]. And that was the reason I got a job working here. I met a, a, another teacher, a Japanese woman, one of these things that happens in Japan, it doesn't happen in many other countries. And she started talking to me and realised that I came from Britain and we had lunch and she, I think she was doing a PhD on some aspect of Britain .. fashion, history, something like that, anyway, we had lunch .. a person that I met once (laughs), anyway, that evening I got a phone call from her, and to cut a long story short, her husband was the boss of the British Studies department at S University. And that was around February and they needed a full-time British teacher for the following April, like for six weeks time. And that was great because it was a full-time job, very few hours. She was terribly apologetic about all the terrible conditions, the enormous hours I had to work, the relatively low salary and the fact there was a house as well ...

Unlike Jane, however, Dave was not at all confident about his ability to do the job:

Dave (2) p. 3

...I remember at the time feeling quite nervous. Because I really didn't know what it would be like, you know, I hadn't observed any classes at all, although I had been teaching part-time in another place, but that was the *tandai* part of the university, and it was all 18, 19-year old girls for one thing, and it was a very supportive atmosphere and there were lots of other people to turn to for advice. But here at the time there was nobody to turn to at all. So it was a bit of a mystery.

But after a week I understood what the atmosphere was like and I look back now and wonder why I was nervous.

Contrast this with Jane's complaint that the teaching conditions in Japan made it impossible for her to do what she felt was expected of her, or what she wanted to do. Dave, however, does not have the same expectations about teaching conditions; rather, his inclination is to seek advice from teachers working there, instead of assuming that his knowledge and experience are all that is needed. Indeed, although it subsequently turned out that most of the classes presented no problem to him. In the case of writing, however, he had no expertise whatsoever:

Dave (2) p.7

... when I started teaching writing I knew absolutely nothing. For the other classes, I felt some sort of confidence, but for writing I had nothing at all.

Right, so you hadn't done any writing before?

No, nothing at all. And I kind of tried hard to find out about it, and thought about it a lot. I realise it's an enormous area and I'm ... just dabbling with it. But I think I've got some good systems now. And I can see how it works and can see some improvement in the students. I collect everything that they write. This is a year's worth of stuff. And if you look through here you can see the improvement of the students....

Compared with Jane, Dave's portrayal of his expertise appears rather modest. Where Jane uses affirmation of her expertise by an authoritative community, namely the university where she received the masters and subsequently taught, Dave's affirmation - at least in this passage - comes only from the tangible evidence that his teaching is effective. Again unlike Jane, Dave goes into some detail about the development of this area of expertise, from 'nothing at all' to having 'some good systems' that work. Finally, where Jane's depiction of her own expertise is very much dependent on other people's recognition and appreciation, Dave's narrative deals only with his personal development in a particular area. In fact, Dave denies that he is an expert in what he now sees as 'an enormous area', claiming that he is 'just dabbling with it'. On the other hand, he has clearly put considerable effort into developing expertise, researching it continuously over the past seven years, participating in a group of teachers who share this interest, and generally thinking and trying to find out more about the subject.

Throughout his interviews, Dave gives the impression of feeling that he is an integral member of his university. This is particularly apparent when he discusses his American colleague, whom he dislikes and who he uses as a counterfoil to his own position, as I shall show below. Where he feels confident, it is in a context where he knows what he is doing, and where he is accepted for what he does.

6.5. Competing discourses of expertise

As discussed, a socially-oriented definition sees expertise as a powerful discourse which is always at risk of being usurped by new practices. This section considers to what extent the expertise professed by Jane and Dave can be said to be powerful in

the sense that what they do is valued and influences others in their communities.

Because power is a relative phenomenon, I consider this point from the perspective of representation of other teachers whom they view as more or less powerful or successful than themselves.

6.5.1. Jane: 'experts and native speakers'

As we saw in the previous section, Jane is dissatisfied with her teaching at the national university, and very critical of that institution, its faculty and its students. The root of her dissatisfaction is the way she feels she is positioned as a foreign lecturer, and indeed as a foreigner generally in Japan. She likens the treatment of foreigners in Japan as similar to that of the blacks under the apartheid regime in South Africa. In the context of teaching, she feels that foreign teachers are similarly regarded as inferior:

Jane (2) p.1

There's also an attitude that English, at least the classes we teach, that they're not serious, because as you know there's kind of a division between what the experts teach, and what the native speakers teach. We're supposed to be teaching conversation and so on. I don't do that. I teach English for Academic Purposes. So basically, my courses are content based. So they learn academic skills, listening to lectures, writing for academic purposes, and so on. I tell them right at the beginning, if you want conversation, you go to Berlitz or ECC. This is English for Academic Purposes; that's how I teach. But the attitude toward foreign lecturers is that we should be doing conversation, you know, what time does the train leave

Paddington Station? What did Aunt Jenny put in her suitcase? You know, I'm not going to teach that. However, the students tend to think that the courses that the foreign lecturers teach are kind of easy courses, they're not serious. They're not what the majority of Japanese faculty teach, they basically still teach grammar-translation, or such arcane subjects as translating Wittgenstein from English back into Japanese although he wrote it in German to start with (laughs).

In this passage, Jane sets up two oppositional teacher categories: one for foreign teachers, who are expected to teach 'not serious', 'easy' conversation classes, and one for Japanese faculty who teach serious and difficult courses of either grammar translation or the translation of 'arcane subjects'. Jane herself carefully avoids both categories, positioning herself instead as an expert in the respectable sounding 'English for Academic Purposes'. Expertise is a key concept in Jane's category construction: she resists teaching conversational English not just because it is 'not serious' compared to what Japanese faculty teach, but also because it is simply not appropriate, in her view, for university teaching at all. That kind of English is the domain of the commercial language schools, whereas her business is to teach English that is appropriate to typical academic practices such as 'listening to lectures, writing for academic purposes, and so on'.

Elsewhere, Jane divides her category of Japanese faculty into two groups:

Jane (2) p.1

...one is the old philological, the old boys school .. where people will have freshmen translate Wittgenstein from English into Japanese or read Beowulf. It's very philologically based. The other which is very small, basically the young Turks. These are people who had spent an eight week-course at Reading University and become applied linguists, hem, hem.

Given what we know about her experiences in Canada, Jane might have aligned herself with this group. However, she avoids doing so, putting them down by drawing attention to their relative lack of academic experience or credentials, compared to her own.

In addition to expecting native teachers' courses to be easier, Jane feels that students and faculty view her as useful only for her linguistic identity. Foreign EFL teachers are seen as 'walking dictionaries', useful only insofar as they are native speakers of a language. In the words of Jane's French colleague, '*c'est comme les citrons, on presse et puis on jette*'. Her main complaint is that students do not seem to be prepared to establish any kind of personal relationship with her because she is a foreigner:

Jane (3) p.2

If I'm in a class and we're discussing something and suddenly I would come and say, that concept, what would be the Japanese word for that? Now students would know it but they would be very unwilling to give it to me. Now I used to think well, you're there to teach English, why should they give you the Japanese word,

but I think there's something more to it. It's the fact they're seeing the foreign teacher as someone you get something from but you don't reciprocate.

In the same way, she feels that she is marginalised, if not completely ostracised by the teaching community because of her identity. On the one hand, her identity as a foreigner is confirmed by her contractual position as a 'foreign guest lecturer' (*gaikokujin kyakuin koshi*) (See Chapters Four and Five). One of the advantages of the job is that such teachers are not expected to attend meetings or be involved in administrative or collegiate duties. However, this is something of a poisoned chalice, since it leads other members of the academic community to regard the foreign teachers as inessential or irrelevant. As Jane puts it somewhat acidly: 'we're kind of just an appendix and many people see an infected appendix.'

6.5.2 Dave: 'Ivory tower versus collaborative teaching'

Unlike Jane, Dave appears very satisfied with his work. He likes the students ('Basically, they're nice kids, you know, come on time, basically do what you tell them... they're not stupid, they work hard and you can see some progress. And you know, they're good fun to be with. I have quite a good respect and regard for the students here') and in return he is popular with them. Likewise his relationships with colleagues both in his department and from other faculties are also generally positive. Dave is even on good terms with the administrative staff, again in stark contrast with Jane.

This is not to say that he is not aware of any difference between his way of doing things and that of the majority of teachers at the university. Dave describes his general

approach to teaching as 'communistic': 'I really do try to create a community in the classroom where people get on with each other and help each other and are friendly to each other. ... and that there is some sense of working together'. But this is not the style of his Japanese colleagues. In the following passage, Dave describes his participation in interviews where graduating students present their thesis:

Dave (3) p.15

.. that was a bit of a shock to me because the other teachers were incredibly critical. It was their last day at university (laughs) and one student who wrote in English, she was the only one who did, 'cause they usually write it in Japanese, she got a real battering from these other teachers. I stood up and said, um she should be admired because she wrote it in English, and it was actually a pretty good piece of writing and blah, blah, blah. And she wasn't crying up until that point (laughs). But then she started crying, you know... She said thank you for protecting me. But that's an interesting little difference between my colleagues and myself. I want to be supportive to them, and there's a definite feeling that, there was no praise, for example, there was no, oh this part was really good, this part needed work, and you could do A, B, C. There was no praise at all. It was all just a list of criticisms ... not just from one teacher, but the same from all of them.

Significantly, Dave is not just aware of the fact that his attitude towards students differs from his colleagues; he is also prepared to stand up and defend his point of view. Although he does mention the student's response, Dave does not relate how the colleagues responded to his criticism of them, presumably in the middle of a student

presentation, that is, an occasion that might have caused some embarrassment or loss of face. His concluding comment ('that's an interesting little difference between my colleagues and myself') suggests that his declaration is unlikely to have had much of an impact on their behaviour. However, what is more important is that Dave feels confident and comfortable about speaking his mind, even where it contradicts the majority opinion.

For Dave, good rapport with colleagues is of paramount importance:

Dave (3) p. 15

I really like to be part of a community and I want to discuss things with other people and make things better and have a social life at work, you know. I'm not particularly ... I don't have the disposition where I divide work and home, the two shouldn't meet. I think it's important that work colleagues get on and see each other socially. They don't have to be best mates, but it helps if you do things together out of the work situation. More fundamentally, I think there's lots of things wrong with the way things are run here and we need to get together to improve that. And if we don't have any rapport, if we don't meet, we can't work collaboratively to improve things for the students.

Although he appears to have this kind of relationship with many of his colleagues, the other foreign lecturer in his department stands out as someone with whom he has no such relationship, and who is depicted as someone who is as different from Dave as possible. In the following extract, Dave tells the story of a recent incident in which the

colleague in question behaved in a way that Dave found offensive and embarrassing, and which seems to epitomise both the American colleague's attitude to work, and Dave's position in direct opposition to that attitude. The narrative was prompted by the colleague knocking on the door and inquiring whether Dave was affected by a water leak emanating from another office. As soon as the door was closed, Dave confided that he detested this man:

Dave (3) pp.13-14

Well, last time I saw him he had rather more of a beard and hair, which is important because (laughs) and he was wearing a big coat and gloves. And he came, I was talking to the office staff downstairs... I was kneeling on the floor probably in a posture of begging because I was 200,000 yen over my budget (laughs). It's a bizarre story because he came in and shouted at me, have you got a book allowance? The term book allowance is a bit odd to me, but anyway. So I was a bit stunned because a) he asked me a question out of the blue that I didn't really understand, b) I was in the middle of a conversation, and c) he was shouting, looking like a Russian revolutionary and very angry. So he repeated the question and I went yes. So he said how did you know, and before I could answer he started shouting to the office about how he'd been robbed for ten years, because nobody had told him about this book allowance. And he finished off shouting at the office staff, calling them thieves and robbers. This bit was in Japanese, and then he slammed the door and went out. And the next time I saw him was just now when he was very meek and mildly asking if about the flood in the office next door. On the face of it, a very nice and kind thing to do, to check

that I'm OK, you know... There was no, I'm very angry with him. I've thought about what to do, I don't want to go to him and have an argument, cause I've had that before. I was kind of waiting for him to calm down a bit and talk

What do you mean you've had that before? With someone else?

No, no, with him. There's a long .. not a long history, but one or two incidents have happened that have soured the relationship. Basically, I'm interested in language teaching and he isn't, and he's academically snobbish and I'm not. And we have completely different views about why we're here. So I don't want to talk about teaching or anything, which is why I would like to talk to him, sorry, I don't know if he avoids me, but I definitely avoid him. I don't go out of my way to talk to him.

What does he teach then?

He's supposed to be like me, an English teacher. I have, you saw that list of writing students, between 40 and 50 students in my class; he has two. Because he has this image that he's in an Oxford college giving tutorials to people about things that he's interested in, like politics and geography and ...biblical cartography, you know, which most students are incredibly interested in. And he's definitely not a language teacher, doesn't want to have anything to do with language teaching. But we're supposed to share, you know, the burden of teaching language, in his eyes burden. So anyway, he makes me sick, really. I'd like to shoot him and get somebody who's really interested in language and it'd make

things so much better. It's not bad, because we don't have anything to do with each other. There's not a sour atmosphere because we don't share any atmosphere.

Dave employs a number of narrative devices to emphasise the difference between the colleague and himself. To start with, the colleague looks weird ('like a Russian revolutionary'). Dave's own behaviour may appear at first sight to have been strange too ('I was kneeling on the floor probably in a posture of begging'), but in the context of the story, it underscores the fact that Dave not only knew about the research money, but spent more than his entitlement, and also that he is on good enough terms with the administrative staff to ask for permission to do this in an informal, jocular manner. The humility in his posture (even if only pretended) contrasts with the overbearing aggression with which the colleague berates the administrative staff, accusing them of being thieves and robbers, even before they have a chance to respond to his initial questions.

Although the narrative is prompted by something external to the interview (i.e. an interruption by the colleague), Dave's conclusion ties it back into his developing picture of his own teaching practice. The contrasts are a useful device for Dave to define his own beliefs and practice, a definition that is also a moral representation. The points to which Dave draws attention are those where the colleague acts in a way that Dave believes characterises bad teaching, and which is opposite to his own practice. Thus, the colleague has a bad relationship and little communication with colleagues or staff at work; he is not interested at all in language teaching and is

‘academically snobbish’; he is not popular with students, and he teaches subject matter that is of interest to him, regardless of the interests or needs of the students.

There is an interesting parallel here with Jane’s accounts. Whereas Jane depicts a working community from which she is excluded (although she hints that those people, such as full-time foreign faculty, who think they are accepted members are in fact deluding themselves), Dave depicts an academic environment in which he feels accepted and in which he can play an active role. The colleague is represented as the odd-man-out, as the one who does not fit into this community. However, another observer of this situation might conclude that the colleague, in fact, is more typical in a Japanese academic environment (see Chapter Four) than Dave.

6.6. Constraints and/or opportunities

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Jane and Dave have the same position, albeit at different academic institutions. I have already offered a gloss of their accounts in terms of dissatisfaction and satisfaction with their work. In this section, I wish to go deeper into their attitudes towards their work. Although differing conditions at work may account for some of the differences perceived by Jane and Dave, I would like to suggest that their attitudes to a great extent determine whether their experiences at work are satisfying or unsatisfying, limiting or allowing possibilities for professional improvement and development.

6.6.1. Jane: lowering standards

As we saw in the previous section, Jane is both disparaging about other teachers in her department and defensive about what she believes to be their positioning of her as

‘the foreign lecturer’. She goes to some lengths to emphasise her professionalism as a teacher, and her expertise as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language, and of Applied Linguistics. However, these efforts are met with either disinterest or resistance.

Students, for example, are unresponsive and unappreciative of her attempts to conduct her courses in a professional manner:

Jane (1) p.17

... I’m the only person here who has a sign out during the semester that says office hours, and the students know that I have office hours. The students get a syllabus at the beginning of a course, and that is not standard practice. But I rarely get students coming who want to discuss something, they might not understand something, but it’s very rare. You get students in a class and you see them the next semester and they will not even say hello to you or nod their heads.

It is not only students who fail to respond to what she believes are professional and ethical working practices, other teachers, both Japanese and other foreign faculty, and the administration are also unimpressed and resistant to her initiatives to make her courses more interesting and creative. For example, she relates how she asked colleagues for help in teaching a research methods course to graduate students:

Jane (3) p.5

I would never ask Japanese faculty, in fact the foreign full-time faculty said they would, but then they fudged on it, they didn't want to do it. [*What was that?*] No, I had a graduate course on research methods in second language teaching and one of the tasks the students had to do was observe a class and write up an observation report what was going on in the class. And actually the only person who said they would was Bob Grainger.

She describes a similarly negative reaction from the administration when she moved the physical location of the class:

Jane (2) p.5

We have this very nice tea house on this campus. So I arranged it, the students loved it, sitting down on the tatami, discussing the literature. The content was the same as it would be in the classroom. But I was told after never to do that again. That was just too .. I don't know, too outré (laughs) So you're kind of always thinking that you can't really have free rein like you might in a western university to play around, take students to see a play, do something a little more creative.

As a result, Jane admits that she has lowered her expectations of standards of work from students. Whereas she initially assigned essays to freshman and sophomore students, now she only asks for paragraphs. Similarly, where she used to look for a connection with students, confirmation that her teaching was considered to be useful and valuable, she is now cooler towards her work:

It's not the mother ship, you know, it's just a place of work. And I've started taking that attitude and it's helped me a lot. It's sad but it's helped me a lot. I see it basically as a bread basket, as a place of work, and I've not sought for those attachments any more. Like this place here, I come in and do my job, make sure it's honest teaching.

Rather than offering her opportunities for development, Jane feels that the conditions at her university are a constraint. Indeed, she compares it with a part-time job she has at a university for the US military in Japan, which provides all the opportunities for professional development, support from administration and faculty, and rewards in terms of rapport with students, that she seems to lack in her full-time job. In her full-time job, what she sees as rigid constraints have caused her to curtail the amount of energy she is prepared to expend in her teaching. Instead, her energies are channeled elsewhere, particularly into her teaching at the US base, but also into two other part-time jobs that she has. Her concern with professional self-development has led her to take teacher training courses, for example, in business and recently, in distance learning in connection with her work at the base. Such development, however, appears to have no relevance or application to her work at the national university.

6.6.2. Dave: sharing expertise

Dave, by contrast, talks about his university as a place which has stimulated and offered opportunities for his professional development. In a previous section, we saw that his lack of experience in teaching writing when he was first appointed to the post

prompted him to go to a weekend workshop at a teacher education SIG of the national association of language teachers (JALT). The participants of that workshop formed the nucleus of a research group that continued for the next seven years. Although this group was outside of his university, he conducted action research projects in his classes. The research projects thus seem to have been beneficial both for the research group, as a resource of shared experience, and for Dave himself in his teaching of subsequent classes of students. From the vantage point of seven years experience of teaching and researching writing, Dave's account bears strong similarities to Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1993) depiction of 'progressive problem solving'. However, whereas their interest is in the individual practitioner, Dave suggests that, in his experience at least, the identification of problems to be solved depends largely on other people.

This is particularly evident in his story about how a teachers' support group at his university was formed:

Dave (2) p.9

Five years ago I started to look around for other teachers who were teaching language and I wrote an introductory note and put it into people's doors and boxes, and said would you like to meet to talk about teaching, language teaching. And the original purpose was because there are one or two teachers, young Japanese teachers of literature or history who I started having conversations with about teaching reading. So I wanted to have a semi-formal mutually supportive teachers' group, so that these Japanese teachers could come, and we could just

talk about it. Of course what happened was that the Japanese teachers haven't come, but other teachers have, part-timers and others, but not from this faculty, I'm the only one from this faculty.

Although it is significant that the original Japanese teachers whose request prompted Dave's action have not joined the group, Dave does not choose to use this as an opportunity to denigrate either the individual teachers or Japanese teachers as a whole. The fact the Japanese teachers came for advice in itself appears to be a situation that is far from Jane's experience of relationships with colleagues. However, whereas expertise, whether her own or other teachers', is taken for granted as a sign of authority which does not invite any discussion, Dave treats this occasion as an opportunity to initiate conversations with other teachers who may have or want expertise in the same area. In fact, although it was established to discuss teaching reading, the teachers support group has addressed a wider range of topics. As Dave explains:

Dave (2) p.9

... it's gone from my agenda to more informal chat. But the people who come have got issues and topics so this year almost every times, we've been looking at videos so that's been very good. So it's kind of a combination of gossip and staff discourse ... salaries and jobs available, and then the topic might move to assessment. At this time of year, it always comes up.

So looking at videos of each other's classes? Video-ing their own classes?

No, more, well one teacher in particular videoed his classes. He videoed his students doing drama, and he comes in in some aspects, you can see him, going round helping. But I guess it's more he'd like to share what his students are doing. And it's interesting for us, because I don't think any of us are doing anything like that. So it's good to see what other people are doing. And I did a presentation skills class this year, so I videoed the students and showed them, for example. And once or twice we have looked at each other's lessons, but it's not a regular thing at all. But it's because we got to know each other, and we're comfortable that that could happen. But I'd like that to happen more. You need time and energy. But I'd like that to happen.

The account of observing videos or actual classes can be contrasted with Jane's experience in which she requested access to colleagues' classes for her graduate students, and was turned down by all but one teacher, also a non-Japanese. The difference appears to be that Dave does not press for access to other teachers' classes; rather other teachers offer to show their own classes, or invite him to watch. Dave describes the groups that he has helped form and in which he plays an active role as important to his professional development, but because other people are involved, the direction of the groups is not something that he can necessarily control. There may be advantages to having a strong influence over such groups, and thus over one's personal professional development, but, as Dave implies, the problem with this is the amount of time and energy that is required. It seems to be a relief to him that a German teacher has taken over direction of the teachers' support group.

6.7. Expertise and positioning

I conclude this chapter by returning to the concept of expertise, and considering how an examination of teachers' positioning can enhance our understanding of it as a social phenomenon. Whereas psychological approaches to expertise focus on what teachers do, this overlooks the important fact that expertise is a judgment of value. A social definition of expertise (Rampton, 1990; 1995) envisages judgments of value as relative, rather than absolute; thus it is important to look at whose judgments are at issue. This relativistic approach to expertise means that questions of power and identity have to be raised.

As we have seen, two teachers with considerable teaching experience and solid qualifications, both occupying similar positions in national universities, nevertheless have very different experiences of their working conditions. Looking at their narratives in terms of power and identity, there are some striking contrasts in the way they describe their positioning. Jane talks up the fact that the institutional position she occupies is marginal, even irrelevant to the academic community of her university. She feels this marginalisation in the way she is treated by students, colleagues and the administration. However, it is not just the university that positions her in this way. In Jane's view, it is part of an endemic xenophobia in Japanese society, by which all foreigners are treated as inferior ('it's like the old South Africa only I'm the black'). Dave, by contrast, does not appear to be marginalised at all. Although he occupies the same institutional position, and unlike his American colleague, whom he makes it very clear is isolated by his own choice and behaviour, Dave enjoys a good relationship with students and colleagues and does participate in his academic community, as we saw in his narrative about attending the graduate interviews.

In terms of positioning, a key point occurs when Dave talks about his American colleague, describing him as 'academically snobbish', and thus inferring that he himself is not. Snobbery might be another way of describing an attitude where social distance is kept as wide as possible. This, however, might also describe expertise. As we have seen, one of Rampton's points is that expertise is relative. That is, one person's expert might be another's fool (Rampton, 1990). At the same time, Rampton maintains that there is a healthy tradition of experts challenging each other. In the case of Dave's American colleague, the narrowness of his domain of expertise, biblical cartography, means that challengers are likely to be few and far between. The same could be said of Jane's old school philologists and their 'arcane' translations of Wittgenstein. In the case of Japanese higher education, and maybe more generally, such challenges may not be viewed as healthy, but rather as destructive or, at the very least, leading to the possibility of an embarrassing loss of face (Goffman, 1959; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). At the same time, the prevailing view of expertise in the university as a narrow specialization challenges alternative views of expertise, namely those that are held by both Jane and Dave.

Despite his overall sense of confidence and satisfaction in his job, Dave is also sensitive to this conflict in interpretations of expertise. As we have seen, in his teaching practice, he avoids setting himself up as an expert and, by the same token, avoids looking down on his students. In his own experience, he recalls a particularly painful experience of being mocked by a French teacher for his inept attempts at producing a French accent. He claims that he would never treat students in this manner, and it is noticeable in his first discussion of his students that he says he

‘respects’ them. Similarly, apart from the American colleague, whom he accuses of being arrogant and snobbish, Dave never positions himself as superior to other teachers. Indeed, he echoes Connelly and Clandinin’s (1999) concern for the existence of a ‘safe place’ in teaching when he talks about the need for teachers to feel ‘comfortable’ with each other before they can start to observe and judge each other’s ‘sacred’ places inside the classrooms. There is perhaps a hint of taking the moral high ground when he describes his Japanese colleagues’ criticisms of the graduating students, but nothing to compare with Jane’s mordant descriptions of almost all of her colleagues.

Dave’s self-positioning, both in the way he talks and in the way he acts, enables him to communicate and interact with others without creating a social distance. His sociability may naturally be part of his personality - he mentions that his father is similarly sociable - but it is a trait that he has incorporated into both his theoretical and practical approach to teaching. Paradoxically, Dave’s continued personal and professional growth, and thus continued enhancement of his reputation at work, depends on his willingness to minimize the social distance with students or colleagues that is encouraged by the institution.

As I have mentioned above, however, Dave’s conception of expertise, his values of collaborative teaching and learning, are not those of the higher educational culture in Japan. This is not to say that there is no collaboration among teachers in Japanese academia. The Japanese teachers, Harumi, Hiro and Kaoru, give numerous examples of collaborative activities, particularly committee work, in which they are obliged to participate. Dave, as a ‘foreign guest’ teacher is under no such strict obligation, but he

has also been included in joint efforts, such as for example, his department's attempt to deal with the problem of the sexual harassment charge against his American fellow EFL teacher. Jane talks about some collaborative initiatives that have occurred in her workplace, such as materials development in the creation of a video and textbook for first year students, but her exclusion from these activities increases her sense of alienation at work. However, collaboration does not generally extend to conceptions of good teaching.

Let me return finally to Tsui's conception of expertise as knowledge and skills that are shared and distributed. The typical view of the expert in academia, as evidenced by Dave's biblical cartographer or Jane's old school philologists translating Wittgenstein and Beowulf from English into Japanese, entails an authority in a defined area of scholarship. Both Jane and Dave believe this kind of expertise is arcane and irrelevant to the needs of their students, and they have developed their own teaching materials and methods in accordance with their views and values. Dave has found ways to share and distribute the knowledge that he has learned in the process of his own development as a teacher. Jane has not been able to do so, and it is by examining her strategic positioning that her frustration and dissatisfaction with work can be explained.

A prominent part of Jane's career story, and a yardstick for evaluating her present teaching situation, is occupied by her experience of running the Adult Immigrant education Center in Montreal, her 'golden age' of teaching. Moving to Japan, she finds that, although she is treated as an expert (because she is a native speaker), she does not have the status or authority to impose her standards or practices on anyone

else. Her attempt to include other teachers in her research skills class for graduates failed because her proposal threatened to undermine the established authority of teachers in their classrooms. By contrast, Dave has been able to observe and record other teachers' classes only because those teachers have felt 'comfortable' with that situation, and because he has not sought to position himself as an authority in any way.

As I have said, Jane and Dave both occupy marginal positions in the body politic of their institutions. Unlike Tsui's Marina (2003), neither of them is in a position to impose their practices and standards on anyone other than their own students (and Jane has found even that impossible). Jane's strategy has been to maintain the position of authority that she assumed in another setting, a position that does not work in the Japanese setting. Dave, on the other hand, does not position himself as an authority in his relations with his students or with his colleagues, even though it is clear that he is proud of his and their achievements and acquired expertise. His collaborative approach to teaching and learning enables himself and others to gain and develop expertise, and this enables him to find satisfaction and fulfillment in his work. However, although it is a way of sharing and distributing expertise, contrary to Tsui's assumption, it is not a necessary condition of expertise itself.

6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the concept of expertise by comparing two ex-pat teachers. Though both are experienced, highly qualified teachers, and though both occupy similar positions at Japanese universities, one is dissatisfied and frustrated, while the other has found the experience of working in a national university to be personally

and professionally fulfilling. Their stories describe how these teachers feel their work is valued by their students and their colleagues, and how they in turn relate to the practices of other teachers with whom they work. I have attempted to explain the differences in the attitudes of the two teachers in terms of strategic positioning:

- Jane perceives that her department does not recognize her worth as an expert in teaching English as a Second Language and in teacher education, and this has led her to adopt the defensive position of seeing her job as merely a money earner. In Dave's narratives, there is evidence that in his relations with others he is not concerned to enhance or emphasise his status or authority, and this has facilitated opportunities for learning and professional development.
- The contrasts between Jane and Dave highlight the importance of the teacher's attitude towards the community in which he or she works, and suggest that a negative attitude may conceal an unwillingness to change one's own practice and beliefs.
- Both Jane and Dave are staunch advocates of CLT. However, Jane considers that the conditions of teaching - the lack of understanding and support by the institution, and the negative attitude of students towards learning English - make this, if not impossible, then at least highly unsatisfying. She admits that she has modified her practice to suit the context simply by lowering her expectations and limiting the efforts she is prepared to invest in making learning more interesting and creative.

- Dave, however, has a very different experience of CLT in quite similar teaching conditions. He acknowledges that many of his students are anxious about using English, and he has worked to find ‘systems’ that work that will lessen their anxiety and improve their ability. Constantly searching for better techniques, Dave invests considerable effort and time in planning, marking and action research. His attitude towards his students and colleagues is to be open-minded and available to help fulfill their needs.

- Dave’s attitude towards his work can be described as ‘progressive problem solving’ (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1993; Tsui, 2003), however he himself lays more emphasis on ‘systems that work’, in other words, in establishing stable practices that guarantee good results. Although there is a danger of stable practices becoming rigid or stagnant, expertise is characterized by reliable mastery of a practice, and this is an aspect that merits closer investigation.

- The experiences of Dave and Jane reveal but do not resolve an issue that is at the core of the debate on appropriate methodology, namely, who should adapt to whose culture: ex-pat teachers or their students (Holliday, 1994, see also the ongoing exchange on CLT and appropriate methodologies in ELTJ: Bax, 2003a; 2003b; Gupta, 2004; Hu, 2005; Liao, 2004).

In the following chapter, I take another aspect of the appropriate methodology debate and explore how language teachers’ identity positions are implicated in the very teaching practices and materials they use.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LANGUAGE IDENTITY POSITIONS: NATIVE SPEAKER, NON-NATIVE AND BILINGUAL TEACHERS

7.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I explored professional identity from the perspectives of career affiliation and expertise. In this chapter, I wish to look more closely at the linguistic aspect of identity, that is, being a native or non-native speaker of English. As I discussed in Chapter One, this is a controversial issue because once identity is linked to practice, then it is hard to avoid value judgments concerning which practice, and hence, which identity is 'worth more' (Medgyes, 1992). Remembering the situation of Gwen Gallagher, this is a line that smacks of racism, and can lead to discrimination if it is used to inform employment policies and practices. Nevertheless, I shall take the line that language identity can be highly relevant to what understanding teachers' practice, and therefore, is a valid subject for investigation. This is not only because different kinds of teachers are positioned differently by students and by their institutions, as some researchers have claimed (e.g. Braine, 1999; Holliday, 1994; Liu, 1998; Thomas, 1999). Language identity is also relevant because teachers position themselves in particular ways in relation to English and to their students, and this is reflected in their approach to teaching content and materials. Again I shall be using the term strategic positioning to explore how and why they do this. In a context such as Japanese higher education, where many universities leave it to individual teachers to determine the entire content and methodology of their courses, the positions teachers adopt with regard to their language identity is of considerable importance.

7.2. Language identity and position

As discussed in Chapter One, researchers have considered language teacher identity from various different angles. Most of this body of research has argued that a teacher's language identity does not or should not make any difference to pedagogical competence (Medgyes, 1990; 1994; Cook, 1999; Edge, 1988). Some researchers have argued that the term 'native speaker' supports racist employment practices, in which non-native speakers are deemed to be less competent and less suitable for jobs as language teachers. Alternative terms that have been suggested include 'expert speakers' (Rampton, 1990) and 'multicompetence' (Cook, 1992; 1999). Another research approach that has proved particularly fruitful has been to challenge a widespread assumption that one kind of teacher identity, namely being a native speaker, is more valuable than a non-native identity, whether because native speakers were believed to be the best linguistic model for learners (Canagarajah, 1999b; Phillipson, 1992), or because, in the case of English, native speakers had the economic and political clout to impose their language, pedagogy and publications on people in other parts of the world, particularly former colonies (Canagarajah, 1999a; Kubota, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; 1998). In many cases, researchers have investigated cases where language identity is thought to matter by the educational institutions that employ teachers (Braine, 1999; Rampton, 1990; Tang, 1997), or by students (Liu, 1999a; Thomas, 1999), or by the teachers themselves (Amin, 1997; Liu, 1999b, Reves & Medgyes, 1994).

In the studies cited above, the teachers who are studied are asked directly about their identity and how it affects their teaching. Another study by Duff and Uchida (1997),

which I described in Chapter One, approaches the topic in a different way, by examining what individual teachers did and how they viewed themselves in terms of their various social and cultural roles. There are a number of advantages to this approach: One is that the notion of role turns our attention to the context in which the teachers work and makes us question what is appropriate. There is an assumption here that more is to be gained about teacher identity from listening to them talk about their teaching and observing them in action, than by asking them to comment directly on their identity. A second advantage is the use of comparative case studies, which preserve the rich uniqueness of every individual teacher, but at the same time casts the differences between them into sharper relief. Finally, the fact that this study is conducted in the EFL setting of Japan, unlike the majority of the studies I have cited, places a different perspective on the identity of the protagonists. Being a native or non-native teacher of English has a vastly different significance in Japan compared with, for example, in an English-speaking country.

On a more theoretical level, the relevance of position to language learning and teaching is highlighted in Kramsch's (1993) study of culture in language teaching. Drawing on the theory of linguistic philosopher, Charaudeau, Kramsch argues that any act of communication between two people actually involves a minimum of four separate positions (Kramsch calls them roles): the speaker is at the same time an addresser and a communicator, while the listener assumes the positions of addressee and interpreter:

The addressee is not merely a recipient of a message issued by the addresser, but also an interpreter of that message according to how she perceives the

situation and the intentions of the addresser. In return, the addresser, finding himself interpreted by the addressee, discovers another self, which is the product of the interpretation by the addressee (Kramsch, 1993, p.47).

Although there is much scope here for misunderstanding, for guesswork about the other's intentions that is mistaken, Kramsch also sees in these elaborated positions the possibility for an 'intercultural or metacultural space' to be created for learners to compare the intentions and meanings they are familiar with in their native culture with those typical in the target language.

Although this is set as a goal for language learners, the 'intercultural space' is also a place for learners and native speakers of the target language to meet. This critical distance is a position that clearly privileges the bilingual or intercultural teacher (Kramsch, 1998). Nevertheless, even bilingual teachers may be unaware of the positions they occupy with regard to either language. As Kramsch observes: 'language teachers are so much teachers of culture that culture has often become invisible to them' (Kramsch, 1993, p.48).

Teachers may not always adopt conscious positions towards the subject they teach, their culture may be invisible to them, but that is not to say that they do not have a position. Just as Duff and Uchida's teachers are revealed through their contrasts with each, so to the teachers in this study reveal their positions when they are juxtaposed with another. Three contrasting pairs of teachers – Japanese, American and Japanese 'returnees' – are presented in this chapter, and their narratives are subjected to the following questions:

- 1) How do teachers represent their language identity?
- 2) Is this relevant to how and what they teach?
- 3) To what extent do they represent themselves as authorities or representatives of a particular language or culture?
- 4) Do they feel that they are forced into a particular role because of their language identity?

7.3. Japanese teacher positions: scholar and translator

I begin with two of the Japanese teachers, Hiro and Kaoru. Though competent in English, both speak English with noticeable Japanese accents and other features, which mark them out as being non-native speakers of English (see Davies, 2003 for discussion on characteristics of native/non-native speaker identity). Hiro and Kaoru both learned English from the age of twelve, both majored in English at university and went on to do postgraduate studies in English literature in Japan, and subsequently in the United Kingdom. Hiro stayed in the UK for several years, unlike Kaoru, who returned after a year, and there are other significant differences in their histories. However, what is most noticeable in the interviews, is the very different way they present themselves and their relation to English. A closer examination suggests that the way teachers present their language identity is reflected in their overall pedagogic approach and their teaching/working relationships.

7.3.1. Hiro

In the interviews, Hiro devoted considerable time to critical reflection and analysis of the place of English in the university system, and to his own position within that context. Through his narratives, Hiro positions himself as belonging to one group of progressive, internationally-minded Japanese academics, in opposition to a second category, which regards their scholarship as separate from the activities of academics in other countries. The significance of the two groups is brought out in an anecdote Hiro relates about how he came to go to the UK to advance his study of English Literature.

Hiro (1) p.5

... my supervisor kept telling us, look, you came to the English Department here, but look we don't have anything to teach you. This professor was educated before the war, or just after the war and didn't have the chance to go abroad and was basically self-taught. He said, you'd better go abroad and study. If you really want to study English literature seriously, you'd better not stay at N University. You should go abroad.

In contrast with his supervisor, Hiro constructs another group of professors who hold a rather different view to studying abroad:

Hiro (1) pp. 5-6

I suppose I was very lucky to have my supervisor. Because there are some very .. how do you call it conservative teachers which really discourage people from going abroad, rather horror stories, like don't go abroad, because you are Japanese. And you can't ever expect, you really should try to read English literature or American literature as a Japanese. That's all you can do. Don't think you can ever read British or American literature as Americans or British read. You should just get on as graduate students and try to read foreign literature as ... as a Japanese. *[Right, right]*. Mm. I really think ... at least you should try to see how much you can read as a British. My favourite graduates are appalled by that kind of thing.

Hiro's comment 'you should try to see how much you can read as a British' relates to Charadeau/Kramsch's idea that understanding a foreign language involves putting yourself in the position of a native speaker of that language. So, for example, if a Japanese graduate student reads T.S. Elliot's *The Wasteland*, in keeping with Hiro's line of thinking, the point of studying this poem is to try and find the sense that a British reader (the author's intended reader) would make of it. This, however, would involve finding out not only the apparent meanings of the words and phrases of the text, but also the countless 'voices' and 'echoes' of other texts (Bakhtin, 1986). A 'conservative teacher' by contrast would read it only for the sense that it makes to a Japanese reader, uninterested in the associations that words and phrases may convey to a different reading public.

Hiro's criticism of this kind of attitude towards the study of English literature serves to put his own attitude, and those of his favorite graduates, in a better light. Although

he does not say so directly, what is implied in the narrative is that his own approach is the opposite of the isolationist, parochial interests of the conservative teachers. Hiro presents himself as a scholar who is curious and unafraid to go in search of knowledge or a kind of knowing that might not in the end be attainable.

Another anecdote reinforces Hiro's self-positioning as a 'real' scholar, compared with the conservative or nationalist agendas that are advanced elsewhere. Here Hiro is asked how he supported himself financially to study abroad:

Hiro (1) pp.6-7

I failed to get funding from Rotary Club. I think I did quite well in their written exam. I was called to head of local Rotary Club and I was told, look, the daughter of my friend is also applying for Rotary Club scholarship andshe's younger and so kindly step down. And I said no (laughs). And then he said, I got a beard at that time, and then he said, Rotary Club are sending young people abroad as a kind of cultural mission or cultural ambassador and you have to be involved in cultural activities there. Go to parties and show off Japanese culture. The idea is to have cute young females going and turning up at parties in kimono and you're not really that kind of So are you willing to shave your beard? And I said no. So then he said, what do you want to do? And I said, well, I want to study and I want to do a degree there and then I want to come back and teach at a Japanese university. So he said, well Rotary Club is not really for *that* kind of thing. Probably you'll spend all your time in the library, not going out to sherry parties. So I'm not sure if that's the reason, but you really need a strong recommendation

from Rotary Club and I didn't get it. I was too young for British Council scholarship. .. I saved ... I was doing part-time work for the Literature Department as an assistant. You didn't have to pay tuition fees and I got a bit of a salary. So I saved some money, and also the teacher who was in charge of the Empson reading group, he lent me money. He said, you can pay me back when you are able. So that was very generous.

Two conflicting views of the purpose of studying abroad are presented: the Rotary Club sees it as a 'cultural mission', on which students are supposed to be 'ambassadors' of their country, embodiments of Japanese culture, beardless and kimonoed; Hiro sees it only as an opportunity to further his knowledge of English literature and advance his career in academia. The point of Hiro's story is to clarify his own identity as an academic, something we can see as substantial and real, as opposed to someone whose real purpose (whether from their own volition, or simply because they can be so manipulated) is to show off a very stereotyped image of Japanese culture.

This is not the only conflict that divides academia in Japan, as far as Hiro can see. In the third interview, he is given the opportunity to select important themes and principles that had emerged in the course of the previous two interviews. In response, Hiro launched into an extended exposition on '*kyoyo*', or high culture:

Hiro (3) pp.1-2

This concept of *kyoyo* which can be translated as culture .. and I think this is a key concept in modern Japanese education. Especially after the Meiji Restoration when they set up the first universities 150 years ago [...] They put lots of emphasis on this enlightenment culture. Japanese education at that period, in the next 150 years, university and higher education always carried on this task of enlightening students. And this is also expressed in languages education. [...]. This kind of language education just carried on until quite recently. [...] So the tide is turning, is shifting. But the interesting thing is that now people are starting talking about *kyoyo* again, even in English classes. They abolished all the simple conversation classes so that now lots of people started talking about English classes should have some kind of content, some kind of theme, not just studying language. But we should learn something through using English as a foreign language. So they're thinking of going back, so that's something, this long tradition of language education and enlightenment, *kyoyo*

Hiro takes a broad historical view of higher education in Japan, seeing attitudes towards languages and language education as swinging between two poles, one a high culture approach, the other a more utilitarian view of English as a communication tool. He does commit himself to the side of *kyoyo*, but not because he believes it is superior, but simply because this was the approach to English teaching when he was at university, and this was the reason that he wanted to study English ('Most of us, many of us went through literature department because we wanted to read Shakespeare in the original language. That's our teachers, we value this *kyoyo* very highly.')

However, students, in Hiro's experience, have a different expectation of English teaching at university:

Hiro (3) p. 10

All the students now have the idea that they learn English because they want to speak English, rather than just reading Harry Potter, they want to use English... but our generation, all teachers went through this university education, people in this department went through different education with probably very different expectation. And a large number of people believe that it's not really the university's task to provide pragmatic English education. I'm really in two minds actually. If university provides the kind of education like NOVA provides, what's the point to have universities?

Here Hiro's position becomes a little clearer. Although he states that he is 'in two minds', his true position is clear from his rhetorical question ('what's the point to have universities?'). The purpose of university education is not simply to learn to speak English. Hiro constructs an opposition between students and society at large and a teaching staff, most with backgrounds in literature, who were brought up in a quite different academic climate. Thus, he finds himself in a 'schizophrenic' system, a scholar in the *kyoyo* tradition, who is obliged to teach communicative English skills to meet the demands of the utilitarian paradigm that dominates language education in Japan.

7.3.2. Kaoru

Despite coming from the same academic background, Kaoru nevertheless presents a rather different attitude towards English. Whereas for Hiro, the purpose of studying English literature was to try and understand texts outside of one's immediate sphere of cultural reference ('you should try to see how much you can read as a British'), Kaoru's aim is to render foreign texts understandable in terms that are familiar to Japanese readers or audiences.

Kaoru is a very popular teacher at his university, attracting huge classes who come for the non-traditional content (Mr Bean, contemporary drama) and for his entertaining manner. Apart from his teaching, Kaoru has a growing reputation in Japan as a translator of plays and modern fiction. He has always taught his classes in Japanese, seeing his role as that of an expert translator or as someone who can explain grammatical usage and rules, and this 'serious' teaching is always interspersed with amusing stories. I would like to argue that Kaoru represents English, and himself as a certain kind of English speaker, from a distinctly Japanese position, a position that may be similar to that described by Kubota as *nihonjinron* (1998; 2001) and to which I shall return at the end of this chapter.

Although Kaoru is a seasoned teacher and translator of English, his spoken English is often inaccurate and halting. In the interviews, he touches on the subject of his competence in speaking English on a number of occasions. In the following extract, he draws a comparison between himself and a colleague:

Kaoru (2) p. 2

... you know, Fujimori-san is one of the most skillful speakers among our staff today. And I said I couldn't speak English like Fujimori-san. But then Fujimori-san couldn't speak English like me [....] The reason why I said that is most of Japanese students, and even Japanese teachers always think that they have to speak well, or they have to do everything perfectly. But you know, speaking and teaching and learning a foreign language, the standard should depend on each person, I think. ...In the *izakaya* I said that comment, and Fujimori-san appreciated it, and said that she couldn't speak English like me (laughs). [...] I don't know whether it's called fluent or not. But maybe my way of speaking... but maybe my way of speaking English is a bit similar to the way of my father's way of speaking Japanese. A bit muttering ... how do you say ... mutter [*you mean speaking not clearly*]. Not clearly, Oxonian accent in a sense [*Oh, you mean a drawl?*] In Japanese, *domoru*, duh, duh, duh, I-I-I-I say, like that [*Stuttering?*] Stuttering, yes. My father is famous for his stuttering. He often stutters, not because he is so shy but he's ... always finding good or funny expressions, so he continues his talking with stuttering.

In this passage, if we look closely at the way Kaoru positions himself, he presents two opposing categories of Japanese English speakers, one represented by Fujimori-san, 'one of the most skillful speakers', the other by himself, with his own individual standard of 'speaking and teaching and learning a foreign language'. This latter category is extended by association with Kaoru's father, a famous Shakespearean scholar in Japan, a professor of English at the elite Tokyo University, and TV personality. Although he states that 'most of Japanese students and teacher' would

regard someone like Fujimori-san as the superior teacher, in fact it is the other category that has the upper hand in his scheme of evaluation.

Kaoru's identification with his father plays a prominent role throughout the interviews, and clearly, it is an association that is tremendously important for his sense of who he is. In the first interview, he explained that his father is regarded in Japan as '*erai hito*', a man with a very high social status, not only because of his job but also as a household name. In fact, I would argue that his father's social status has everything to do with the stories that Kaoru tells about him.

Kaoru's success as a translator of modern drama and fiction has allowed him to change the kind of teaching that he does. To begin with, his first teaching posts were focused on the all-important university entrance exams. He started out teaching as a doctoral student, working part-time in a high school and preparatory school, preparing students for the university entrance exams. This is the time in his life when Kaoru claims he worked hardest to improve his English ('that's when I became interested in English and English expressions and reading English'), poring through a compendium of questions and answers on typical grammar-based, exam questions, trying to anticipate what his students would ask in the class. In his teaching experience at the prestigious preparatory school and subsequently at his current university, Kaoru has come across students who speak better English, or are generally 'smarter' than he is. This does not trouble him, however: ('[At the preparatory school] I had a lot of things to teach them. So it was satisfying for me and they taught a lot of things to me, so give and take'). From this comment, Kaoru appears to be comfortable with the fact that, although he is the teacher, some students may be more proficient in English.

There are other things that he can teach them, that are related to their study of English in Japan. In his high school and cram school teaching, the kind of English that students are expected to know and that Kaoru is expected to teach them is determined by the traditional format of university entrance exams, which would mostly comprise of discrete gap-filling exercises to test grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension, summary and translation into Japanese of English texts. Kaoru's first stages of expertise in English teaching are crucially bound up with the Japanese education system.

In the last few years, however, Kaoru has acquired a name as a translator and it is expertise in this area that provides the focus for many of his classes. He brings to his classes texts that he has translated, such as plays by Alan Ayckbourn and Michael Frayn, and popular comic films, such as Mr Bean. Kaoru views university as a time when students should be free to try out many new things (this indeed was his own experience of university). The purpose of his courses appears to be to introduce students to the 'tricks of the trade' of a rather specialised form of literary translation.

Kaoru (3) p.4

Once it was suggested that since there are a lot of people who speak good English they can tell the actors the meaning of the text, or what kind of plays are on in the West End or Broadway. Lots of people can explain or introduce what English or American plays are like. But what translator should do is different from what these people can do. Translator should make the content into Japanese. It's quite different because experienced introduce these not so difficult. If you have

information you can do it. But what translators do, in a sense it's a creative work, it's not just putting the words into colloquial Japanese or natural Japanese, but dramatic Japanese, or dramatic dialogue in Japanese

Kaoru here makes it clear that his expertise does not depend merely on a good knowledge of English. As he says, 'a lot of people' could explain English or American plays. However, it takes a special kind of skill to turn these plays into 'dramatic Japanese'. I would argue that this skill needed to do this is focused on Japanese language and Japanese culture. Although the material that Kaoru works with is English, his creative input is attendant on Japanese culture, that is, to what is meaningful, what works in Japanese.

Sometimes the English texts that he has worked with cannot be translated at all:

Kaoru (2) p.9

It's difficult to explain. It's easy to explain the meaning of something, but in the case of Mr Bean you sometimes have to explain that there is no meaning.

Basically I always explain among English cultures you will face lots of things with no meaning, like Mr Bean.

Kaoru is content to explain some aspects of British culture as simply lacking any meaning, or perhaps lacking any meaning that corresponds to anything in Japanese

culture¹⁰. This acceptance of cultural difference, of otherness is, I would argue, what distinguishes Kaoru's approach to English from Hiro's.

7.4. Native speakers: being the foreign teacher

I have suggested that Japanese teachers can differ significantly in the way they present themselves in relation to English and this is likely to affect what they teach and how they teach it. How does this relate to native speaker teachers? I have touched on linguistic proficiency as a factor in how or why Japanese teachers may present themselves in a certain way. Native speakers are, by definition, proficient in the language they teach, but is this relevant to what they do in the classroom? How do they see themselves in relation to their students, who in this study are all Japanese? In this section, I examine the cases of Jane and John, two American teachers who have different experiences of what it means to 'be the foreign teacher' at a Japanese university.

7.4.1. Jane

As we saw in the last chapter, Jane is not particularly happy working in Japan, and this dissatisfaction surely has a bearing on how she teaches and presents herself to her students. Jane's self-positioning in the interviews rests quite heavily on her sense of ethnic and cultural identity. She starts the first interview by stating that her ethnic origin is 'European American,' and at different points in the interviews, states that her attachment to this identity is one of the reasons she does not want to become more integrated into Japanese society, or spend more time learning the language. In

¹⁰ The problem of translation that is raised by Kaoru has been discussed by the literature on translation, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

addition to this, she believes that Japanese xenophobia makes integration impossible

This mutual negative positioning is apparent in the following extract:

Jane (3) p.10

... why the teaching is not satisfactory here. Part of it is just the nature of being a foreigner in Japan. Like I said, it's the apartheid system. [*Mm hm*] Even had I better mastery of Japanese, I don't think that would help. But maybe it would because my colleague over here who's full-time faculty, American guy, he speaks fluent Japanese, he seems to fit in a bit more. So maybe it's the linguistic thing. But I have no motivation because I see it basically as a place of work. I'd rather learn Slovene, something that's closer to my heart than spend the time with Japanese.

Jane has a very strong opinion about Japanese society's attitude towards non-Japanese. The use of the term 'apartheid' is not a casual exaggeration but an analogy that colours her whole thinking ('academic apartheid', Hall, 1998). Elsewhere, she compares the English teaching situation in Japan to her experience of teaching in Francophone Montreal.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Jane teaches English for Academic Purposes, because she believes that this is appropriate for university students, even though, as we have seen, she feels that students and faculty expect only conversation practice of their foreign teachers, a practice that she scorns. Jane is highly critical of the way she

is positioned as a foreigner, but at the same time, she portrays her expertise as based on her cultural identity.

In the following extract, Jane describes her writing class:

Jane (2) p.3

We have a couple of texts that we use, that look at writing in the traditional rhetorical modes.[...] Some people would say, well you're forcing this kind of Western type of discourse, organisation, and that's not .. students should be writing their own cultural style and they should be writing haiku in English, and they should be writing ... shi-ken, shi-ko, ki-sho- ten-ketsu... Well, if that's the case, what's my role as a foreign lecturer? I see my role here as exposing students to different cultural set-ups, in this case, different writing styles. And I tell them right up front that this doesn't mean that because we're looking at traditional Western academic, I should say Anglo-Saxon, because the French and the Russians write differently, write paragraphs differently than say the Brits and the Americans. The traditional Anglo-Saxon paragraph or essay writing doesn't mean that this is superior, in other words, I don't want a colonialist, superior attitude, like we're bringing you the real story here. No. Culturally neutral. Your way is good too. Why not? But in this class, this is what we're going to focus on this.

Jane's claim that her role is to expose students to 'different cultural set-ups' leads her to an essentialised and stereotyped notion about writing. She appears to have taken to heart Kaplan's (1966) seminal text on how writing styles differ in some of the major

cultures of the world (a text that Kaplan later (1987) referred to self-deprecatingly as his 'doodles' article). Jane does not appear to be aware of Pennycook's (1998) attack on this particular article, or other attacks on contrastive rhetoric as a valid approach to the study of culture and language (e.g. Kachru, 1999), although she is aware of and sensitive to the ideas surrounding linguistic or cultural imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). She does not question whether the 'traditional rhetorical modes' are indeed representative of much academic writing, or whether *haiku* or *ki-sho-ten-ketsu* actually relate to any writing that students are expected to do at university.

Although she claims that she is 'culturally neutral', her concession that 'your way is good too' in conjunction with *haiku* or *ki-sho-ten-ketsu* comes over as condescending, particularly since these two writing styles would likely be regarded by students as inappropriate for academic writing, in Japanese or English.

In fact, Jane is not culturally neutral at all. In designing her courses, she chooses content that involves American culture: (' I try to base the courses around something to do with American culture; after all, I'm the American lecturer.') At the same time, she is highly critical of a text book and video course that was created by her department: Jane describes a syllabus consisting of a text and video that is set as a compulsory course for all first-year students that was designed by members of the English department, both Japanese and full-time non-Japanese. Jane has taught this course and takes strong exception to the attitude towards culture that it implies:

Jane (2) p.3

... the material there was either ... OK, it was trying to avoid, it didn't show the English speaking countries' culture in a positive way. Or the culture was just skirted, it was eliminated and the texts were science or technology, culturally neutral. So it was kind of trivialisation of culture, if the culture was there, it was negatively seen. It was either slavery, or discrimination or exploitation or the culture was seen as trivial.

Jane is in fact ambivalent about her role as an authority or even representative of American culture. On the one hand, this is the position that she takes in her teaching, but on the other hand, she suggests that this is only because this is what she believes the Japanese educational authorities expect of her. Yet, having never lived in the United States in her adult life, Jane has no strong affiliation with the country of her birth, and particularly not with its present politics.

Thus, Jane's position as 'the foreign teacher', and as 'the American lecturer' is one that she takes because she thinks that it is most advantageous (it is what Monbusho, her department and her students want), and to that extent is strategic. It is negotiated only to the extent that it is what Jane *imagines* to be in her best interests. She complains that teaching is not 'a two-way street' at her university in Japan; the students are not prepared to engage with her, and this justifies her resentment toward them.

7.4.2 John

John has by far the longest experience in Japan (almost thirty years at the time of the study) and is fluent in Japanese, as we saw in Chapter Four. He studied the language

to an advanced level at a Japanese university and, among his various jobs, he has worked as a translator for an Institute of Transportation and was a broadcaster for a radio English language learning program. He is also married to a Japanese woman. He says that he sometimes likes to joke with his classes that he has been speaking Japanese for longer than they have. From the point of view of Japanese ability and integration into Japanese society, John provides a radical contrast with Jane.

Nevertheless, John, like Jane, also expresses some (though far less extreme) dissatisfaction with his teaching. I will show that his dissatisfaction also influences the way he projects his identity as a teacher. John's teacher identity is predicated on a notion of difference, in particular cultural difference. Much of John's teaching demands examining and playing out idealised roles: how would an American say this or do that. Sometimes, this approach appears to be very successful in enabling students to develop ways of self-expression. Sometimes, it doesn't work, and John is apt to lay the blame on the students rather than on examining the nature and the purpose of the roles.

In the interviews, John frequently draws attention to his identity as an American, and especially a Chicagoan. In the first interview he related long anecdotes about his childhood growing up in suburban Chicago. In subsequent interviews, he returned frequently to the subject of his Chicago roots: for example relating his experience as host of an NHK educational English language broadcast, he introduced a jingle that he remembered from his childhood ('for those who love it, live it and make a living from it'). John's Chicago roots are evident in the way he speaks English, and he takes

exception to returnee students who have lived abroad for many years, but who insist on speaking English with a markedly (or perhaps unmarkedly) Japanese accent:

John (3) p.5

I mean when I'm in Chicago just because of the Jewish population, there's an influence on certain people, certainly my family are not Jewish, but .. yiddish words, we use yiddish words [*Like shtick?*] Like *shtick*, yeah. Why? I don't know. Maybe it's my own affectation. I know what a *shlamiel* is but I don't think that we use the word very much. It may come from television from all the Jewish comedians too ... So ... that has always been my goal whenever I've done anything with pronunciation, it's just to get people to find a distinguishable way of speaking, which I think they all can. And to some degree, the reason they're so bad in the classroom is because they do it on purpose because they don't want to be distinguished. You hear my students who've lived abroad, they will purposely speak in a very Japanese way. It's annoying.

Throughout John's narratives, there is a recurrent theme of frustration, mainly with students, but also with colleagues, who refuse to do things the way John would like. In his classes, he places a great emphasis on role-playing. Indeed, his PhD research into cultural non-verbal behaviours examined student role-playing in assigned situations, and the experience of doing this study encouraged him to do more of them in his classes. As we can see in the above extract, students sometimes refuse to 'play the game'. A few of the students in John's classes are 'returnees', in other words, students who have spent some time, and often several years, at schools in English-

speaking countries. However, in John's experience, many returnee students who may speak English with native-like proficiency instead insist on speaking with a Japanese accent so as not to stand out in class (see also Kanno, 2003).

In this next extract, John discusses how for him rapport with students is helped by there being an optimum number of students. Too many and it is difficult to manage communicative tasks, too few and he finds that the teacher/student roles are difficult to maintain:

John (3) pp. 7-8

Is there a common link between those classes where you feel you have good rapport? Is it just indefinable?

One thing, numbers. The lower ones, where I have around ten students it always works better. If I have fewer, it gets really painful because they're looking to me to carry part of the burden. And I don't want to because whenever I do step in, it kind of kills things. They don't mind me stepping aside as long as I was there, to supply them, to help them, to encourage them. They didn't really need me to direct them. And if I gave them a hard time, usually, it was because they were acting like teachers ... and going, OK, What do you think? Next, what do you think? And then I would give them a hard time. I would say, we're having a discussion, you're not a teacher, you're acting like a teacher. A discussion you don't do that [...] A good discussion, you have the student say, well, this is what I think, what do you think about that? Or they hear someone say something and

they comment on what they said. But you can only encourage that, you can't enforce it.

John's frustration in this passage is not that students are not playing a role, but that they are playing the wrong role. What he overlooks is the fact that the 'discussion' he sets up in his classes is also a form of role-playing. But he is perhaps aware of the discrepancy: there is a fine line between authentic discussion in which students speak English and spontaneously follow the discourse pattern that he has in mind, and a mere voicing of pre-planned lines.

The use of English only in the class is also something that is part of John's teaching persona and part of the role of students in class. Although he speaks and writes Japanese fluently, John claims that he almost never speaks Japanese in class. At the university where he teaches part-time, and where students would never have the opportunity to see him outside of the class, he doubts that students are even aware that he can speak their language. Usually, when students lapse into Japanese, he reprimands them quite good-humouredly ('No, I make a joke out of it, and they laugh. I tell them aah! and they jump'). Occasionally there are more serious conflicts, as in the following anecdote:

John (3) p.8

A student told me something the other day, and I was really tempted to tell him off. Well, he said, I don't remember what I said to him, but he said something in Japanese. Now I understand Japanese, better than they understand English. It

might not have been directed at me, which was one reason I didn't say anything.

Who are you to say that? It's not really a question literally. *Anata wa iwaretakunai*. Literally, I don't want somebody like you telling me that. It kind of bugged me but I let it go.

In this situation, John faces a dilemma: should he reveal the fact that he speaks Japanese, or should he continue in his role of monolingual English speaker? He opts for the latter, but resents the student as a result. To some extent, this is not just a problem of keeping in role, but how or whether to assert authority. At one point, John admits that he apologises to his students if he feels that a particular activity or part of his syllabus has been unsuccessful through some fault of his. John appears to lay the blame on his own failure as a facilitator or manager, but not on the pedagogical value of the tasks themselves. However, the students appear to be uncomfortable with this kind of positioning, possibly interpreting it as a loss of face for John, the teacher. Elsewhere, however, authority in the classroom and outside is an issue that figures largely in John's reflection on his career and his teaching.

At various points, John has things to say about his position at work as a non-Japanese, a position that he often finds frustrating. For example, in his first university post, he thought that he would be looked on more favourably after obtaining a masters. Instead, 'my ... allegiance was questioned. I work for them and I'm going to another university. What kind of thing is that?' At times, being the foreigner at a university has landed him with jobs that his Japanese colleagues feel he is more suited to because he is a foreigner. On the other hand, being a foreigner who speaks Japanese has been and continues to be a huge advantage, for although he does not use Japanese

in his classes, his proficiency enables him to take a full and active part in the collegial life of his department, something that Jane for example is unable to do. In his reflection on his career, John derives some satisfaction in having succeeded in comparison with many Japanese colleagues, who have never published or done research in their fields, and also with non-Japanese peers in Japan who find themselves stuck because they do not speak Japanese well.

7.5. Japanese ‘returnee’ teachers: authorities or role models

The two Japanese women in the study, Harumi and Maiko, have (to my ear) a native-like proficiency in English. Having spent several years in education systems outside of Japan, both would be described as ‘returnees’, or *kikokushijo*, a term which has particular resonance in Japanese society (Kanno, 2003). According to Kanno, during the 1960s and 70s, returnees to the Japanese education system ‘were regarded as misfits who did not know how to conform to the Japanese norms of behaviour, disrupted harmony in the classroom, and generally got on the nerves of teachers and classmates’ (2003, p. 18). Although pressure from the socially and economically powerful parents of such children, and the more general aspiration toward internationalization have forced attitudes to change toward returnees, problems remain regarding their re-integration into Japanese society. Kanno’s longitudinal study of four such students from adolescence through to adulthood in the 1990 examines the turbulent course each took from an initial polarization toward one or other language and culture to an eventual balancing of their English and Japanese-speaking identities. The complexity of her respondents’ shifting identities leads her to eschew the term ‘bilingual identity’ in favour of the plural ‘bilingual and bicultural identities’.

In this regard, there are notable differences between Harumi and Maiko. Harumi spent far less time abroad than Maiko. She lived in Alaska for three years from the ages of five to eight, then Australia for three years from age 12 to 15, this during the 1960s and 70s when prejudice in Japan against returnees was at its highest. By contrast, Maiko spent more than sixteen years in the United States from the age of eight until her mid-twenties, returning to Japan just three years prior to these interviews.

Although differences in their attitudes may also be expected given their contrasting work situations - Harumi has been tenured at her university for over a decade and commands a position of some authority in her department, while Maiko works only part-time at a Japanese and an American university - it is surprising how marked those differences are. Harumi goes to some lengths to deny the possibility that her bilingualism marks her out in any way as different, while for Maiko, being bilingual and bicultural is the key feature of her self-representation.

7.5.1. Harumi

More than any of the other teachers in the study, Harumi presents herself as a teacher who is an authority, both of her subject and over her students in the classroom.

Whether she is lecturing on phonetics or teaching an English language class, her approach appears the same. Students have to listen to her explanations (of a phonetic description) or her pronunciation (of an English word) and follow her example in order to reproduce the same perfectly. She does not appear to be aware of the disparity between her teaching practice and the way she acquired English herself.

In her own case, learning English at school in Australia, what was most important was that she was left to pick up the language as quickly as she could, so that she could compete with other students for the teachers' approval. It gave her considerable satisfaction that she was able to do this within a short time, although she comments that this may have been because the syllabus in Australia was considerably easier than that in Japan. Harumi mentions that she felt uncomfortable with teachers when she arrived in the middle of the school year:

Harumi (3) p.7

I think it's when I changed schools and whether the teacher made me feel comfortable or not. I think that counted very much for me. The teacher I had for only one term, so it's only a short time, it's maybe not fair to judge on such a short time, but I didn't really like her very much because she, I sometimes feel that when I go to a new class or new school that the teacher doesn't really want me. You know that feeling? You know, she had everything under control until then, and someone coming in the middle of term and she has to look after the child. And I sense that when it happens. And she doesn't exactly ignore me, but doesn't want to take much time on me. So I think I kind of sensed that with her.

It is clear that what Harumi liked at school was attention from teachers for doing well. She did not particularly relish simply blending in, but even less did she like the possibility of standing out because she was worse than her fellow students in any way. Despite this, Harumi's teaching approach is to single out students to read out work

they have prepared, such as translations, summaries in Japanese or in English, English texts that they have written or simply a reading:

Harumi (2) p.3

And so I had one student read .. say two sentences, not the whole paragraph, two sentences. [*In English?*] Yes, in English, and I'd check their pronunciation and their intonation. Usually that takes quite a long time actually (laughs) 'cause they're not used to speaking out loud. [*Do you make them repeat then?*] Oh yes, well, not the whole class, not all the time. But if they read it wrong, I'll say, you read this word wrong. You got the accent wrong, or the intonation was wrong, why do you think the intonation was wrong? So the student has to think and then if he or she gets it right, then OK, but sometimes I'd have to show them, and sometimes get the whole class to repeat it, if it's really important, but if it's just that particular sentence... But I do try to take time to do that, because unless they can get that right, they can never speak.

What is particularly interesting about Harumi's self-representation is her insistence on playing down cultural differences, whether in educational practices that she has experienced, or in her own identity as someone who may be in any way different from the students because of that experience.

Harumi (3) pp.1-2

People tend to say that there are cultural differences, for instance in Japan, when they're talking about Japanese education, where they're criticising Japanese education they would refer to the American education, usually it's the American education, and say how good it is in America, how it helps to bring out the individual, individuality in students etc. If you've only experienced Japanese education, you tend to believe that, you know, think that everything in America's good and Japan's bad ... again, well there are obviously differences, but that different methods in education which changes even in one country ... I don't think it's really cultural differences. Again people tend to say, in Japanese people tend to use the word, *o-be*, which puts Europe and America in one group, and say in Europe and America, things are like this, whereas in Japan .. but having experienced university education in Britain, there were differences, of course, but more similarities .. much more similar to Japanese education, what I experienced in Japan, for instance, how the teachers were, or how the lecture went on.

In this extract, Harumi undermines a pervasive stereotype in Japan 'everything in America's good and Japan's bad'. Harumi's experience of higher education in the UK suggests to her that 'there are more similarities than differences'. Although she covers herself by admitting that things may be different in the United States, in the UK at any rate, undergraduates are no more mature or hard-working or curious than their counterparts in Japan. Harumi's observations here are in fact rather similar to her comments about moving from Australia to Japan. She notes that when she started at a private Christian girls high school in Tokyo, it was no more of a culture shock to her, having attended a similar kind of school in Australia, than it was to other girls who had been to public Japanese schools. Harumi's downplaying of cultural differences

perhaps serves to put more emphasis on the content of her syllabus. It suggests that everything that must be learned can be codified, explained and mastered.

Consequently, this puts Harumi in complete control.

From her interviews, Harumi comes across as a rather authoritarian teacher, prioritising discipline and control in her classes, and taking full responsibility for all learning that goes on, rather than encouraging students to take this responsibility themselves. Her experience of education in different countries has brought her into contact with different kinds of teachers: those who are 'in control' and 'professional', and those who, like her sixth grade teacher, allowed students too much freedom and 'didn't really teach'. Different teaching styles were also described in Japan: Harumi remarks that at university before her time, it was customary for better students to skip all lectures and to discuss matters other than those specified on the curriculum in their meetings with professors. This, however, is not the style that Harumi liked as a student and it is not the style that she adopts in her teaching now.

Teaching all levels of undergraduates, Harumi differentiates strictly between the first and second years and the more mature third and fourth year students. Compared with other teachers in the study, her attitude towards the younger students appears rather denigrating. For instance, when Harumi talks about these students, she describes them as childish or silly: for example, students in England, like undergraduates in Japan would 'giggle at something the teacher said and the teacher would frown on them'. She tends to teach to the level of the weakest students: students who make mistakes are obliged to repeat the correction, and if Harumi thinks that this is a more widespread problem, the whole class is made to repeat. Students are portrayed as

being incapable of learning without her express help. This has an effect of increasing a social and intellectual distance between Harumi and her undergraduates.

7.5.2. Maiko

Whereas Harumi downplays the relevance of her bilingual ability, Maiko, by contrast, presents this as the most significant aspect of her identity. Like Harumi, her life abroad (in her case, in the United States) was divided into Japanese in the home, and English outside. Also, like Harumi, she admits to a self-consciousness and extreme unwillingness to be identified as different in any way to her peers. But where Harumi managed to blend in with her peers relatively quickly and surreptitiously, Maiko had a more traumatic experience:

Maiko (1) p.3

I was put in a first grade room for a reading class, and had a first grader teach me how to read. [*Right, mm*] Yes, humiliating. More than anything it was my pride as an eight year old that propelled me forward to acquire the language more than was necessary.

Being singled out as an ESL student dented Maiko's confidence and, because she was Japanese, she felt that others regarded her as inferior to other students, even after she had been recognized as a 'gifted' student and placed in an accelerated program at the age of 14.

Like Harumi, Maiko describes how she became a keen observer of people when still a child. For Harumi, it was important to learn social rules so that she could fit in. Maiko, however, claims to have developed a more critical detachment from her surroundings. Describing how a Japanese-American family befriended her, she talks about how even at the age of eight, she was aware of 'agendas' that were to do with asserting social identities:

Maiko (1) p.4

There was this girl called Lisa Appleton (laughs) We all remember somebody like this, so I had Lisa Appleton, and she was fourth generation Japanese and her mother pushed her so that she would be more Japanese so always at birthdays and things I was invited. So even as an eight year old I could see OK, well, clearly she wants these other people to come, but she's invited me. And when she's talking to me, she's talking to me in this baby talk. Why is that? And then looking back at it, not now, but when I was fifteen or sixteen, I realised, oh, she didn't really see me for who I was, but her mother made me seem like something else, which was Japanese, from the country of her origin, of her ancestors. So she really didn't see me for who I was, and that was discouraging. And I think I sensed that at eight or nine. I could make sense of it, make it coherent when I was about sixteen. I still think about Lisa Appleton, and wonder about whatever happened to her. Did she ever get back to her Japanese-ness

Even after her family returned to Japan, leaving her to continue her higher education in the United States, Maiko claims she sometimes felt insecure or uncomfortable if

she was identified as Japanese, or foreign by her American friends. However, this was nothing compared to the discomfort she felt back in Japan. Jokes about the length of time they had spent abroad Maiko took personally, as they made her feel unwelcome.

An important event that had occurred in Maiko's life shortly before starting these interviews was the marriage of her older sister. In talking about this event, she comes to some conclusions about what kind of identities are available to her, and which one she will choose:

Maiko (3) p.8

...we always had this sense of embarrassment and that was taboo. A big part of our life is something that we just can't talk about. So my sister getting married, that's going to be a crux. It's a big part of her life but it's going to be also something that she can't talk about ... Even with our sister-in-law, something we don't talk about. So I don't know if I want to be in that sort of tribe. I want to be with my people. The whole wedding made me think about that too. At weddings they do these profiles. This is her background .. they didn't say how long she lived abroad, just she lived abroad. My aunt said, she was sitting at our table and she goes, oh how long did she live abroad? and I was like 19 years, and she was, that long? Your Japanese is OK for someone who has lived abroad that long. I just kept my mouth shut. But looking back, I know there was a sense of shame that was imposed from the outside, and then we internalised and it became part of it. So my sister chose one route, which was assimilate yourself completely to the Japanese community by choosing someone who was very Japanese.. More than likely I

probably won't do that. For the longest time I thought that dating Americans was the only way to do it. But now I think that I want someone who's exactly like I am, from a similar background... who can go back and forth between cultures.

Maiko's approach to teaching is, as might perhaps be expected, very different from Harumi's. Where Harumi is distant and aloof, Maiko tries to get close to her students, and 'understand where they're coming from'. In her job teaching composition at the American university, this seems to be quite successful. Maiko stands out from the other native speaking teachers as someone who can help the mostly Japanese students develop their ideas, since she can and does conduct one-to-one sessions in Japanese solely for this purpose, even though she admits that this approach does not work for all students. However, there are also disadvantages to the identity that she projects. In both the Japanese and the American universities where she teaches, she was appointed as a 'native speaker', and the fact that she is bilingual is not regarded by the institutions necessarily as an advantage. In the Japanese university she is expected to conduct all her classes in English only. However, the students, knowing that she is Japanese, put pressure on her to speak Japanese or to translate when they cannot understand. Maiko succumbs to this pressure but feels guilty because she does not fit into the institutional categories for teachers. The same is true at the American university, where Japanese teachers all tend to teach in Japanese and in her view seem uncomfortable and awkward in English.

Apart from her writing classes, she regards her bilingual proficiency as an asset in the translation classes that she teaches to advanced students at the Japanese university, as she describes in the following extract:

So do you translate from English to Japanese?

Both. We go back and forth. And the ideas behind a word, even a simple word like 'love', what does that mean in English, and what does that mean in Japanese. If you have a line like, I love you in English, can you tell me the literal translation there? And I make a distinction between literal translation and creative translation. Creative translation is the one where even though you're following the original voice, you're not basically following it. You translate culture, you make the story still ... live ... in a different language. That's what I'm very interested in. Every week we compare definitions. Like *bunka* ... is that the same as culture? Or something like *gakko*? Does that have the same meaning as school?

The approach described here corresponds to that of language-and-culture proponents such as Byram et al (1994) and Kramsch (1993). This kind of elective class attracts very small numbers of students, all of who tend to be returnees with high TOEFL scores of over 600. For some of these students, Maiko represents a role model of a 'functioning bilingual', something that she insists requires 'humility' and a great deal of work to maintain.

By the end of the interviews, Maiko claims that the process of self-reflection has clarified for her what direction she wants to take in her career. Though she does not say so directly, she implies that she intends to leave teaching and concentrate on her

writing of short fiction. In her presentation of the teaching world to which she belongs in Japan, she does not know any teachers like her. (The same was true of her teaching experience in a state university, where the only other Asian teacher was a Chinese math professor). At the American university, she does seem to be more integrated into a teaching community of native speaking teachers, where her Japanese language and her willingness to spend time talking to students about their writing and more personal problems are acknowledged and appreciated. However, her own commitment to teaching is tenuous. She sees it as helpful to her personal growth, but believes that this will benefit her ultimately as a writer rather than a teacher.

7.6 Language identity politics

7.6.1. Nihonjinron

Regarding Japanese identity, Kubota has argued (1998; 2001) that discourses about the teaching of English in Japan are predicated on a nationalistic idea of Japanese uniqueness, known as *nihonjinron*. Policies that embody this discourse, according to Kubota, are evident even where they apparently are intended to advance internationalisation. The problem with *nihonjinron* is that it promotes a stereotyping of both Japan and other cultures, thus, as Kubota (2001) argues, seeing cultures as essentially ‘other’ is a deterrence to gaining an understanding of and allowing receptivity of other cultures, as well as a denial of the hybrid nature of one’s own national situation.

In this chapter we have seen two Japanese teachers who each occupy rather different positions with regard to their teaching of English. Whereas Hiro comes across as a

scholar, seeking to widen his own and his students' understanding of another culture by studying texts that are not readily understandable, Kaoru seeks to present English culture in terms that are familiar within the Japanese cultural repertoire. Hiro, and his seeking to understand 'as a British', thus has more in common with Kramsch's (1993) view of language learning. But does this make Hiro a better teacher than Kaoru? It is worth pointing out that Hiro admits that his teaching, particularly at the beginning of this career when he sought to use his own experiences of learning as a basis for teaching others, was 'awfully unpopular'. Students found his classes too difficult and objected to his assignments of large quantities of reading matter in English. Kaoru, by contrast, appears from his own account to have always enjoyed a great deal of popularity with his students. Can this be only because his ultimate focus is on Japanese culture?

Kubota's concern with representations of the 'Other' may be to overemphasise the negative effects of stereotyping. As Turner and his colleagues have argued (1987), stereotyping may be inevitable in the process of representing different social categories, and is not necessarily negative or pejorative. One of the dangers of taking Kubota's warnings too seriously is to see all translation as inferior to a more critical approach to language learning, one that seeks to challenge and change assumptions and understandings that one has in one's own language. However, translation also surely offers similar challenges, even if at the end of the exercise, the concern is more with the Japanese than with the English. Kaoru states that he encourages his students and his son to go and gain as much experience of the world as possible, just as he did when he was younger. His point is that only with a good knowledge of one's own culture is it possible to do credit to translating a text from another. Foreign language

education advocates (e.g. Byram et al 1994; Kramsch, 1993) have argued that knowledge of one's own culture is gained as a result of critical engagement with another culture. Kaoru's point is that one has to start with knowledge of one's own culture *in order to* engage with another language and culture.

Rather than seeing Hiro as a better teacher than Kaoru, because he takes a more critical approach, there is surely room for both kinds of teachers, each one playing to their respective strengths. What makes both of them good teachers is not the cultural position they adopt towards language teaching, but rather their desire to stimulate learning and to encourage students to experience as much as possible.

7.6.2. Linguistic and Cultural Imperialism

Turning to the opposite side of the coin, linguistic or cultural imperialism, similar complexities are apparent. Jane and John both position themselves in their teaching as 'the foreign teacher'. Jane emphasizes that she is 'the American lecturer', bringing American culture into the content of her classes, even though this is not how she likes to see herself, and in some ways this identity conflicts with her preferred self-image of a hybrid 'European American'. John too likes to draw attention to his American identity, with his frequent references to his Chicagoan roots, and his insistence on speaking English in classes, even though he is fluent in Japanese. But can it be argued that they are linguistic or cultural imperialists?

Phillipson's definition of linguistic imperialism offers some solid ground on which to base an answer. In his view, 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities

between English and other languages' (1992, p.47). Canagarajah extends this definition by elaborating that linguistic imperialism is not only the result of political and economic inequality between the center and the periphery, it is also the cause of these inequalities (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 41). At one level, the dominance of English in Japanese universities appears to be assured by state educational policies which privilege that language over any other foreign languages taught in Japanese education (Kubota, 2001). But it is the Japanese educational establishment which dictates this arrangement, there is no implication of any other foreign power in this situation. Moreover, the teachers are employed directly by the universities; they have no connection with the United States beyond the fact that they are passport holders.

Does the mere fact that they are Americans, and that they have different ideologies and values from that of their students mean that they are nevertheless implicated in the kind of geopolitical inequality that Phillipson and Canagarajah are concerned about? Although Japan's economic situation has certainly declined since the economic bubble burst in the early 1990s, Japan cannot be compared economically with countries like those in sub-Saharan Africa (Phillipson) or Sri Lanka (Canagarajah). Politically, perhaps, there is a case to be made for claiming that it is in a position of subservience to the United States because of its dependence on American security forces.

Jane believes that Japanese universities promote a 'negative motivation' to learning English. If this is true, it may be a form of resistance to a policy that yields few real benefits to individuals. On the other hand, Jane's own negativity towards Japan and her refusal to take the steps that would make her integration in that society easier and

bring her closer to her students may simply make it harder for her to see the picture as less black-and-white. Jane's own negative and defensive attitude towards teaching in Japan, that is her strategic positioning, may actually serve to perpetuate an unhappy working relationship, but it probably has nothing to do with linguistic or cultural imperialism.

7.6.3. Intercultural Spaces

Finally, the returnee teachers presented in this study offer contrasting accounts of positioning in their teaching. I have described Harumi as authoritarian in her teaching style. However, she could more charitably be described as professional, well-organised and fair. Her priority is to cover a syllabus so that all students have understood, and she appears to take this approach whether she is teaching the technical terminology of phonetics or correcting students' pronunciation or translations.

Maiko, by contrast, appears to position herself much more at the level of the individual student. In her writing classes, this means that she devotes a lot of time to individual conferencing with students, trying to 'understand where they're coming from'. Whereas Harumi is not interested in anything inside the students' heads that she has not put there herself, Maiko is concerned that students develop their own thinking on a subject with the help of pre-writing and dialogue. In many respects, Maiko appears to occupy the intercultural space that Kramsch recommends; indeed, one of her classes is specifically designed to explore comparative cultural meanings and the problems that these have for literary translation. Another class examines

writers who have succeeded in crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries, such as Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto.

However, adopting this position is not without problems. Minimising the distance between herself and her students means that Maiko is less able to control the class. At the Japanese university where she is employed as a native speaker, and where she believes that this means she has a duty to conduct classes in English, the students demand that she use Japanese with them, and she is not able to refuse. Minimising the distance also means teaching to the highest common denominator (where, as we saw, Harumi taught to the lowest): Maiko knows that the students who tend to be attracted to her elective classes are bilingual returnees, who see her as a role model. Students with lesser language skills do not apply to take these classes. In compulsory classes she finds that weaker students drop out or are left behind. Even in her writing classes at the American university, although she has more time to give to her students individually, she realizes that her approach of trying to connect with the student is not always successful. Students who fail her course may find the freedom that she offers too vague and too risky. She can see that some of them do better with the more structured approach to writing instruction that is taken by the majority of her colleagues.

Intercultural teachers may indeed serve some learners better, but Maiko's experiences suggest that this may not be true in the case of all learners. Higher educational institutions, such as those in Japan, favour large language learning classes often of mixed ability. In the interests of fairness, sometimes a traditional authoritarian approach may work better.

7.7. Conclusion

This chapter has applied strategic positioning to an examination of language identity among English teachers. Using a contrastive approach, positions of language identity have been explored in the cases of three pairs of teachers. With each pair, significant differences were noted in the ways the teachers positioned themselves towards the subject they taught and towards their students.

The findings are used to critique three theoretical constructs in applied linguistics:

- *Nihonjinron* has been understood as a concept that denies cultural hybridity and maximizes the distance between Japanese and other cultures (Kubota, 1997; 2001). Applied to language teaching, this has been seen behind the continuing prevalence of grammar-translation in teaching foreign languages in Japan (Law, 1996). One teacher examined in this chapter uses a teaching method that appears to reflect this position. However, the example of Kaoru shows that the ‘othering’ of English need not be a bar to good, inspirational teaching.
- The two ex-pat teachers examined both draw attention occasionally to their status as native speakers, and they may sometimes use this to enhance their authority in the classroom. However, this status is not always an advantage, as we saw with Jane’s complaint about being treated as a ‘walking dictionary’ of John’s about being given certain duties by his department because he was ‘the

native speaker'. The relatively marginal position of both these teachers, and of ex-pat teachers who are employed in Japanese higher education in general renders their power to impose cultural or linguistic values on their students and on their institution largely ineffective.

- Attaining an intercultural space has been proposed as an ideal in language teaching (Kramsch, 1993). However, Kaoru and Harumi are two examples of two teachers who make no attempt to achieve this in their approach to teaching English, and who are nevertheless confident of the effectiveness of their teaching. Maiko, by contrast, is a bilingual who strives to make this the aim of her classes, yet she fears that in doing so, what she wants to convey is inaccessible to all but those students who have shared a similar experience of life and education abroad.

Thus, in conclusion, teachers' position in relation to English is clearly relevant to how and what they teach. Their position is affected by their own histories of language and educational development, by their social positioning or how they are perceived by their students and others, and last but not least, by how they position themselves strategically. From this viewpoint, such aspects of teaching as method or style become less significant than teachers' values (Johnston, 2003) and their commitment to teaching in accordance with those values to the best of their abilities.

This brings me to the end of my analysis of the teachers' narratives. In the final chapter, I review the findings that have emerged in the course of this study and discuss their relevance to the main issues that were raised in the first chapter of this

thesis. In addition to professionalisation, expertise, and language teacher identity, the findings are also applied to a critique of a recent appeal by Kumaravadivelu (2001) for a postmethod pedagogy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHING POSITIONS: CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

I began this thesis by citing the example of a university English teacher who lost her job, judging from the court ruling which upheld her university's action, because of her identity. It would be easy to simply condemn the Japanese higher educational and legal systems for their racist attitude, and yet by highlighting their basic ideas about the relation between teacher identity and teaching practice, I have shown that the matter of identity is considerably more complicated. It is all very well to argue that teachers should not be judged by who they are, but by what they do, by their professional and not their cultural identity, but in practice, the two are inextricably entwined.

Over the course of the preceding chapters, I have therefore chosen to deploy a concept of positioning to explore issues surrounding language teacher identity, in particular professionalism and cultural or language identity. One advantage of this concept is that it brings to our attention two contextual dimensions: one social, the other historical, or to use Saussure's terms, synchronic and diachronic. Each of these dimensions in turn allows for different levels or degrees of focus. Teachers are positioned and position themselves in relation to individual students; they are positioned in classrooms, in a curriculum, in an institution, in a professional field, in a country. They are also positioned in history, they are positioned by the infinitely complex series of events that have formed their social context, and by the events and

experiences that have shaped their careers, their practices and beliefs. Yet they are not merely pawns of forces beyond their control; teachers position themselves to make the most of new situations that are presented to them, or where they find such situations to be threatening, they do so to defend themselves against possible harm. This is strategic positioning.

The study of teachers that has been presented in this thesis was conducted between November 2001 and March 2002. For one of the American teachers, at least, the attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York on 11th September, 2001, had fundamentally changed the way she perceived her own identity. Before 9/11, Dana had always been vaguely apologetic about her national identity; afterwards, she claims, she became more assertive, even provocatively so, provoked herself by the attack on her country which she took as an attack on herself (Dana (3) p.1). But each of the teachers to a greater or lesser extent saw events occurring in the world at that time, both at home and abroad, as impacting on their lives and work. Dave, for example, describes giving over two entire lessons to students to discuss 9/11 (Dave (3) p.3); he also recounts how he helped two students write a letter of protest to President George Bush over U.S. foreign policy and international threats to Iraq (Dave (3) p.4). The Japanese teachers also are affected by external social and political events. Like Dave, Kaoru also talks about bringing politics into the classroom, giving students a speech by Nobel Prize winning novelist, Kenzaburo Oe, about the position of Japan in the world (Kaoru (2) p.4). Even teachers who do not address political issues in their teaching, such as Harumi, are still affected by them. In the final interview, Harumi expresses her concern at the prospect of tighter control by the Ministry of Education over the work of university teachers (Harumi (3) p.9), as

the higher education system in Japan breaks with nearly a century and a half of a tradition of teacher autonomy in the university (Horio, 1988) and struggles to improve its standing at home and abroad.

Thus, the changing social context affects the way people are positioned and the way they position themselves. People are positioned in ways that are beyond their control and at the same time they have a freedom to adopt positions for themselves. Through this exploration of teacher's positioning, I have found that three important aspects are brought to the fore:

8.1.1 A scattered profession

Although there is some acknowledgement that ELT is a scattered profession both geographically and in its lack of common principles (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004), the drive for professionalisation that I described in Chapter One has meant that the literature relating to English Language Teacher education has tended to stress commonality, whether in knowledge and expertise in methods and research (e.g. Richards & Nunan, 1990), in attitudes and approaches to individual self-development (e.g. Freeman, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2002) or political stance (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Freire, 1998; Lankshear, 1996). This study, however, has highlighted the fact that English teachers do not share common constructs of a professional identity as a group. Although groups of teachers who held a comparable position in the higher education system had more common ground, even in those cases, different attitudes towards their career and towards their current identity as teachers were significantly marked. The social categories that teachers position themselves around in their talk tend to be constructed as polarities: they are

this but not that. A teacher is an academic, not a company employee (Harumi); a specialist in English literature, not TEFL (Hiro); a translator, not a model of good spoken English (Kaoru); a language teacher in Asia, not a real teacher (Dana). This of course undermines the case for seeing ELT in Japanese universities as a profession. But is this only disadvantageous?

8.1.2. Job satisfaction

Although I started the interviews by looking for ‘successful’ teachers, a striking feature that emerged in the analysis was the emotional state of the teachers. This seems to be inseparable from considerations of where they are in their careers, or what they do in the classroom, or how they relate to their students or to other people they deal with at work. Those people whose identities were most slippery, who tended to set up categories of people they opposed, were those who were least satisfied and who felt least secure in their jobs. Emotional aspects of teaching, such as job satisfaction, have received little attention in research, although it was raised by Lortie (1975) and has also been addressed by Clandinin and Connelly (1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). How relevant are emotional states such as job satisfaction, confidence, enthusiasm and so on to effective or successful teaching?

8.1.3. Focus on individual agency

Related to job satisfaction is the concept of individual agency, that is, whether people felt that they were in control, or whether they were controlled by other people or by circumstances. This is most clearly illustrated in the contrast between Jane and Dave.

Whereas Jane feels inclined to give less to her students, because she feels that she has no other choice, Dave, in similar conditions has the energy to be creative and flexible. As they talk about their work, they position themselves strategically to justify the actions that they take or resist. For example, Dave states that he ‘respects’ his students, and although there are individual students who cause him problems, generally he finds that they respond well to his teaching and improve their English. Jane, however, has a negative opinion about her students, whom she finds to be arrogant and ungrateful, and who work more for the sake of credits than for any deeper learning, and she has reacted to this perception by lowering her expectations of what students can do.

In this chapter, I bring these aspects to a re-examination of the main theoretical areas that I reviewed at the beginning of this thesis, namely, the professionalisation of English Language Teaching, the nature of expertise, and language teacher identity, and consider their implications for language teacher education and development. The conclusions that I reach in this study might appear to coincide with the claims made by Kumaravadivelu (2001) for a postmethod pedagogy. In fact, however, my position is significantly different, as I shall discuss. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on the methodology that was employed to generate and analyse data of teacher identities, and make some recommendations for areas in which this line of research could be extended further.

8.2. Reflecting on professionalisation in English Language Teaching

In Chapter One, I drew attention to a divide in Applied Linguistics thinking over the desirability of professionalisation of English Language Teaching. Those who argue

for professionalisation (e.g. Clayton, 1989; Clemente, 2002) point to the benefits to students in having better qualified teachers who are aware of the goals and standards expected by the profession, and of the current ideas and practices which have shaped them. Those who are more skeptical (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2001; 2003) see professionalisation as an imposition of values and practices that originate in the English speaking centers of power with the concomitant denigration and rejection of values and practices that prevail in English language classrooms elsewhere.

As I have shown in Chapter Four, Japan has a vast and well-developed higher education system. English is tested almost ubiquitously as a criterion for university entrance, and although the content and style of these tests is changing gradually, still the majority of these are based on detailed knowledge of English grammar and an ability to translate English to Japanese rather than on proficiency in communicative skills. As I have shown too, the vast majority of teachers in Japan are Japanese graduates of that education system. High school teachers are university graduates with very little theoretical instruction and only two weeks practical experience prior to starting. Most of the education and socialization as teachers is therefore done on the job. There is, of course a professional discourse of Japanese schoolteachers of English, that is represented in publications and other forums of teaching materials and of research (e.g. JACET), and the discourses of international ELT filter through into these to some extent. In higher education, new teachers tend to have no training or teaching experience whatsoever (though this is not unique to Japan). Instead, university language teachers are treated on a par with teachers in all other fields as experts in their defined field of study.

The Japanese teachers in this study, thus, seem to be largely unaffected by the discourses of the international (and hence, Anglo-American and Australian) ELT profession. This is not to say, however, that they are unaware of teaching practices in countries other than Japan. The three older Japanese teachers had all taken masters degrees in the United Kingdom, and one of them, Harumi, had also received some of her elementary and high school education abroad. Teachers who made an impression on them abroad and at home were the ones who displayed aspects of teaching that the teachers in this study now value in their own practice.

Thus, the teachers whom Harumi valued were those who, whether in Australia, the UK or Japan, were 'professional' and who kept control of the classroom; for Kaoru, it was teachers, like the professor who founded the Empson reading group at his university in Japan or his professors in England, who encouraged students to read extensively and discuss 'difficult texts'. In fact, Harumi and Hiro are also aware, to a greater or lesser extent, of alternative teaching professional discourses. Harumi describes and criticizes a teacher at school who set independent work, perhaps with a learner-centred orientation. Hiro rather ambivalently admits that he uses standard EFL course books to teach freshman English, and claims self-deprecatingly that teachers from the commercial language schools would do a better job than him. However, he also ultimately disparages the practices of these schools, commenting 'if university provides the kind of education like NOVA provides, what's the point to have universities?' Both these teachers signal their affiliation with the academic communities of the fields, and with the community of fellow academics who work at their universities (though Hiro does not feel so strongly a part of the Law Faculty to

which he belongs). The professional discourse and community of ELT is simply irrelevant to them.

By contrast, the ex-pat teachers in this study are aware of and to varying degrees affiliate themselves with a professional discourse of ELT. Again, they are aware of alternative practices where they teach: Jane refers to the older members of her department as ‘old school philologists’, while Dave describes his American colleague as an expert in biblical cartography who treats his classes like an Oxford University tutorial. John, interestingly, began his university teaching career following the example of his predecessor in having students read and translate texts, but found this dissatisfying. A proponent of task-based learning and role plays, his teaching practices would appear to embody the cultural biases that Holliday, for example, condones.

Of all the ex-pat teachers, Dave expresses most satisfaction with his work and is the most committed to ELT professional discourse. He had been enrolled continuously in TESOL studies during the seven years he had been working in Japanese higher education, and engaged in action research projects with a teachers’ research group that he helped to set up. Dave puts into practice a philosophy of collaborative teaching and learning, which appears to be very different to the classes that are described by the Japanese teachers in this study. Despite that cultural contrast, Dave is confident that he succeeds in his aim of making his classes comfortable places where students are encouraged to learn from a variety of resources. In addition to his popularity with students (compare his classes of 50 to his colleagues’ class enrolment of 5), Dave has good relations with

colleagues, with whom he welcomes opportunities to talk about work. As we saw in Chapter Five, Dave feels that he is given a great deal of freedom in his teaching in Japan. There are few opportunities for shared enterprises with colleagues, and one that he mentions, a ceremony where Japanese faculty criticized students' graduation theses, upset him sufficiently to stand up and defend the students. However, unlike Jane, Dave does not feel marginalized or undervalued because he teaches differently; he has the confidence to teach in accordance with his professional beliefs and with his moral principles in the way that he feels is best in his specific circumstances.

The position that I adopt here is thus a qualified support of ELT professionalisation; qualified for two reasons: Firstly, ELT professional discourse is bigger than just the line that is taught to new teachers, bigger than the content and method of teaching materials that are sold around the world. It contains within it conflicts and contradictions that are part of its dynamic force. ELT professional discourse contains elements that may be ethnocentric, linguistically or culturally imperialistic, native-speakerist, or culturist; it also incorporates critical pedagogies that aim to expose and change practices (including languages and cultures) that lead to discrimination; in addition, it includes arguments against both these positions (Holliday, 2003). Voices of dissent within a discourse lead to new positions within it, and as a result, to new approaches in teacher education and teaching materials. There is a risk of course that, in the course of professionalisation, certain positions become dominant, and that other positions are subsequently disregarded or outlawed. But a greater risk is that professionalisation does not develop at all with the result that there is insufficient attention paid to teachers and their students, and to the possibilities for improvement of their capacity to fulfill their potential.

Secondly, I believe that there are other professional-academic discourses with which many teachers affiliate themselves. Such discourses would include, amongst others, literature, cultural studies, translation and interpreting, descriptive linguistics, such as syntax, lexicology or phonetics. These are academic disciplines which have developed in their own right without reference to English Language Teaching, and which tend to be taught, whether in Japan or in English-speaking countries, teacher-fronted lectures or smaller but still teacher-dominated classes typical of university teaching, which Bernstein has characterized as ‘collectionist code’ (1974, cited in Holliday, 1994). Many teachers have come into English Language Teaching at university through these disciplines and their affiliation is to them rather than to the scattered profession of ELT. Although there is certainly a great benefit to be gained from collaboration between teachers from different professional academic discourses (Johns, 1997), teachers who espouse the specialist discourses should be free to develop their expertise in them as far as possible.

Teachers need professional guidelines, they need theories and methods and standards of good teaching which they can make their own. Although the EFL industry, driven by academic journals and conferences, teacher education courses and materials publishers, provides one set of professional standards and practices, many university teachers feel no pressure to espouse any such standards and practices, as we saw in the examples of Kaoru and Harumi. Nevertheless, there is a potential global-local tension which is likely to result in an unsatisfying teaching experience, if not outright conflict.

8.3. Reflecting on expertise

Let me expand on what I have said by moving on to expertise, which includes the aspect of best practice that I have touched on above, but which is less tightly bound to an association with a group of people or community which endorses it. In Chapter One, I described Tsui's (2003) case studies of English teachers in Hong Kong and questioned whether she is justified in claiming, as she does, that expertise is basically a social phenomenon that is shared or distributed among a community of practitioners. Her point is that expertise is dependent on sharing with others, but it is not clear from the evidence of the present study that this is necessarily always the case.

Tsui's conclusion is based on an experience of introducing the practice of process writing into the school English language curriculum. The initiative was spearheaded by a teacher, Marina, who was at that time head of the English department and thus in a position of authority over the other teachers. Even though Tsui goes to some lengths to assure us that Marina sought to gain the acceptance and understanding of the other teachers, the fact of her position of power should not be ignored. In addition, although we know that Marina learnt considerably from the experience, we cannot know for certain that the other teachers had the same understanding of process writing as she did.

Judging from the present study, as we saw in Chapter Six, Dave is a teacher who sees the development of his own expertise as dependent on interaction with others. He continuously seeks to improve his knowledge and skill through action research projects on his classes, feedback requested from his students, through enrollment in

academic programs in TESOL, or simply through talking about teaching with other teachers. This is an attitude of 'progressive problem solving' described by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) and Dave's problems, or rather obstacles to effective teaching, occur for different reasons. They may be due to his own shortcomings, such as his lack of experience in writing instruction when he started working at the university

Dave (2) p.4

I kind of tried hard to find out about it, and thought about it a lot. I realize it's an enormous area and I'm just dabbling with it. But I think I've got some good systems now and I can see how it works and can see some improvement in the students.

Or they may be due to institutional obstacles:

Dave (2) p.5

I think there's lots of things wrong with the way things are run here and we need to get together to improve that. And if we don't have any rapport, if we don't meet, we can't work collaboratively to improve things for the students.

What Dave describes with all the groups that he has been involved in is a sharing of information, that is, a sharing of experience. But is this the same as sharing expertise? The answer to this is suggested in Dave's talk about writing instruction: ('I think I've got some good systems now'). Dave's expertise may be developed in a social way, but ultimately it is an individual phenomenon, something that marks him out as successful, even exceptional at what he does. Other teachers may benefit from his expertise, if he talks about it, or if they happen to observe him teaching, but no one can simply reproduce what he does.

One of the things that troubled me while reading Tsui's conclusion was the thought that if expertise is a social phenomenon, then, with the exception of Dave, most of the teachers in my study must fall short. Harumi, in particular, is one teacher with a radically different style of teaching to Dave. She has taught the same content and in much the same way from the beginning of her teaching career. Significantly, when she went to study in the UK for a year, she notes that she was relieved to find that the phonetics courses she attended were very similar to those she taught in Japan, even down to using the same textbooks and exercises. When asked if she discussed her teaching practice with colleagues, she seemed somewhat surprised and answered that she might sometimes talk about problems she was experiencing with individual students. In sharp contrast with Dave, who treats all his students in the same way and who, he claims, is sometimes criticized by his students for not being sufficiently strict, Harumi presents herself as a highly authoritarian teacher, as can be seen in the following extract:

Harumi (2) p.3

I give them all these small rules. I tell them - I don't want to, but I have to because sometimes we have disagreements about what's right and what's wrong -So I tell them that if their mobile phone rings, they have to walk out and I'm not going to have them back in ...I say at the beginning, if it happens once, I'm not going to let you take my classes. Not just that one, but forever. And usually they come to my office crying and saying please, please that they'll never do it again. And I have to give up and say, well, just don't do it again.

Harumi does not talk about developing expertise in her teaching, although she does talk about doing research in phonetics. Although she teaches English language because she is obliged to do so as a member of her department, she sees her real expertise as a researcher and lecturer in that field. This is how she describes an effective lecturer, a model for her own best teaching:

Harumi (3) p. 1

Someone who was well prepared, and ... who was able to explain something very difficult, something that was difficult for students to understand on his own, but if it's explained by the teacher and then the student understands it by the end of the lesson, then that would be a good lecturer.

Although they are not lectures, her language classes also seem to be based on this teacher-fronted model, with students taking turns to translate or summarise texts they have prepared at home, or to utter or write down spoken English from tapes or films that she plays for them in class. Judging from her account of how she conducts her language classes, Harumi is quick to jump in and correct them if they make a mistake. Indeed, testing students is an important aspect of Harumi's teaching, as is expected by her institution. In addition, the large classrooms and class numbers (typically she teaches classes of around 40) offer further evidence that this style of teaching is what is expected by the institution.

Harumi's account of developing expertise in phonetics, in particular her experiences of writing textbooks with groups of fellow specialists, are, as I have noted, reminiscent of Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. For Harumi, the only relevant expert community is the community of phonetics specialists; she does not appear to think in terms of a community of teachers, or how teachers of different specialist subjects might inform one another. Although Harumi has to work closely and extensively with other teachers, their shared activity concerns matters of administration, not of teaching practice. Again, as with the physical size of classrooms and students numbers, the institutional requirement for teachers to collaborate on administration, but not teaching practice, serves to condone a prevailing view that expert teachers do not depend on sharing or distributing knowledge about what they do with other teachers.

A final point about expertise relates to Dave's comment about developing 'good systems' for teaching writing, and to Harumi's denial that she has changed her

teaching over the years. Tsui follows other researchers of expertise (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Schon, 1983; 1991) by asserting that expertise is characterized by reflective practice, which entails continually working on the edge of competence. This kind of attitude may indeed be true of expert practitioners, but asserting that it is central to understanding expertise is to overlook the importance of the stable and consistent practices that are deemed to 'work' with students, and that have been developed and fine-tuned over time. Novice teachers, indeed, work at the edge of competence most of the time, and yet, as with any practice, eventually the learning curve becomes less steep. Expert practitioners may keep that edge, because the energy required to generate change is palpable and infectious. But more importantly, expertise promises consistently reliable, effective teaching.

8.4. Reflecting on teachers' language identity

This brings me to a reconsideration of the significance of teachers' language identity. The positions I have adopted thus far on professionalisation and on expertise are highly relativistic, that is, I have tried to make the point that exactly what practices are adopted are of less relevance than the commitment to self-development within a professional or academic discourse. Along the same lines, I would like to argue relativistically that language identity is of little importance in evaluating teachers; native speakers are not necessarily better than non-native teachers, or vice versa. However, at the same time it should be acknowledged that teacher's identity - their social position, the way they are positioned by others, and the way they position themselves - is central to what they do and to how they relate with their students. It makes a difference to students whether a teacher is a native-speaker, or not.

Let me return to a question posed in the first chapter: is an ‘us-them’ divide (Holliday, 2003) inevitable in language teaching? I would argue that it is, and that that is not necessarily a bad thing. Although people’s identities are vastly more complex than merely their native language, language identity in the classroom is often the salient thing (Edwards, 2000) about teachers. This is obvious in the case of the native-speaking teachers who took part in this study, whether they themselves see that as an advantage and something that they like to stress to their students (e.g. John), or as a disadvantage, as in Jane’s experience, where she feels that native speakers are treated only as ‘walking dictionaries’. It is also clear in the cases of Maiko, for whom being bilingual is a mixed blessing as students pressure her to use Japanese with them, contrary to what she believes to be the expectation of the department that employed her, and also (though less so) in the case of Harumi, who seeks to downplay cultural differences, although her bilingualism gives her an added measure of authority over her students.

In the case of Kaoru and Hiro, who were examined in Chapter Seven, a slightly different aspect of identity is at issue. Although in both cases, their competence in English and their experiences learning it are relevant in their relations with students, of greater relevance is their attitude towards the language. For Hiro, the purpose of studying English is to read texts written in English and to come to understand ways of thinking and behaving that are foreign to Japanese culture. For Kaoru, the purpose is to represent English texts in terms that are understandable to Japanese readers or audiences. I have characterised their respective positions as scholar and translator.

In earlier chapters (Chapters 1 and 7), I mentioned Kramsch's (1993) depiction of language teaching and learning as a series of position-takings, in which both participants move to subsequent positions as a result of dialogic interaction. This is similar to notions of cultural praxis (Bauman, 1999), where engagement in a social practice leads to change occurring both in the protagonist and in the social practice. A reflection of this can be seen in the TESOL exhortation to language teachers to use their understanding of the various professional and social communities in which they are engaged, 'to inform and change themselves and these communities'.

Nevertheless, the ideal that is expressed here is complicated by the issue of power. In an unequal power relationship, it is the weaker party that changes the most. Rather than a meeting of minds or cultures, what many critical linguists (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994; 2001; 2003; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) are squeamish about is the possibility that a dominant culture, that is, a western one, will be imposed on people to the greater advantage of the stronger side. To take issue with one of these critical linguists, Canagarajah's (1999) argument is that people who are engaged in ELT, whether teachers or students, who are not native-English speakers, need to challenge the values inherent in the language and appropriate it in the furtherance of their own needs and interests. However, whilst resistance to any form of injustice is admirable, the problem I find with this position is that it implies a negative or even belligerent attitude towards the English language, culture and native speakers that may undermine or prevent efforts which learners have to make to understand them in the first place.

This is not to say that native speakers may not hold views or values that are different to, maybe in some ways opposed to those of their students. In his final interview, Dave considers the extent to which his teaching is political:

Dave (3) pp.1-2

It's a very interesting question. Well I suppose there's political beliefs with a big P, what party you support and your philosophy of how things should be organised on the planet ... and those must affect the things with the small p, which is how you react to other people, and how you behave with other people in a social situation, so I don't think it matters, but I suppose in teaching it's the small ps that come out, you know, for me that's a kind of ... you know, belief that people are social animals and need to get on in a society and in a community and some are stronger and better prepared than others, and those that are better off, either financially or intellectually, or whatever, have some duty to help the others. But the others are not necessarily weak or have anything to contribute. I don't know if I make that direct link, but I really do try to create a community in the classroom where people get on with each other and help each other and are friendly to each other. ... and that there is some sense of working together, sort of communistic political belief if you like. The big P does come out directly because in various situations and circumstances, particularly the choice of materials that you might use for example are affected by that. So I tend to choose things that are happening in Japan that I think are important for young people to have a political view on. I

don't say, I don't think I'm as proselytising to say I think this and I think you should do, but it probably comes out that I have a certain view ..

AS: Can you give an example of what you mean?

Well, sexism, for example. A lot of my students are women. Maybe more than men. And Japan is a very sexist society. You just have to open the pages of the newspaper pretty much every day and find some .. topic where there's a sexist slant on that topic. And I use newspapers a lot with students, either getting them to read newspapers in their own time [...] And a lot of other issues, you know, political issues about equality and social issues, and I'll follow that up with a reading from a recent newspaper or a listening. And the topics I choose I think are controversial but they're ones I think are important for people to be aware of their own society and what's going on around them.

As Dave points out, a teacher's political and moral views (his 'big P' and 'little p') emerge in the choice of materials and the style of teaching. As someone with fairly left-wing, 'communistic' beliefs, Dave chooses to bring what he sees as contentious issues to the classroom, and it could be argued that this is already to impose his own political beliefs on his students. In these classes, however, Dave expects students to discuss the topic of the day in pairs, while he listens in, noticing areas of linguistic interest or difficulty, which he presents to the class at the end of the discussion. Thus, Dave minimizes his own part in the discussion of these issues, seeing his role in that part of the class as facilitator. Nevertheless, students do sometimes ask him directly

for his opinion, in which case, he states that he always answers frankly¹¹. Dave's actions can perhaps be compared with Kaoru's account of bringing to his classes English texts of a contentious nature, such as Kenzaburo Oe's speech on the place of Japan in the world, and having students discuss them in Japanese. Kaoru claims that he refused to tell them his opinion, preferring his students to discuss and argue their own.

Can either of these teachers be criticized for their actions? For both Dave and Kaoru, these are accounts of successful classes in which student appear to engage enthusiastically with the subject matter. Both of them adopt particular positions of identity which their students recognize and can respond to. These positions are more than just choices of materials or methods. They are signals replete with information about who the teacher is and how he relates to his students and to the world. If students respond positively, then they are more likely to be receptive to what the teacher is trying to achieve in the class. The influence on the students may be even more profound. Kaoru describes how a group of his graduate peers who were supervised by a senior and highly respected professor came to adopt the professors mannerisms and his sense of humour, just as Kaoru has acquired some of his father's mannerisms, such as his habit of stuttering and his self-deprecation. Such profound influences, however, usually occur after long exposure, and most crucially, if the learner is willing and sees it in their interest to accept it.

8.5. Reflecting on postmethod pedagogy

¹¹ This is very similar to Freire's (1998) description of the position he would take with students.

The position that I have arrived at is similar in many respects to that advocated by Kumaravadivelu (2001), which he terms a 'postmethod pedagogy'. In particular, the conclusions that I have drawn echo the dissatisfaction felt by Kumaravadivelu and others with 'the concept of method as the organizing principle for L2 teaching and teacher education' (2001, p. 538). Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the conclusions reached through this study and postmethod pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu defines this as a 'three-dimensional system consisting of the parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility' (p.537). Let me consider each of these in turn:

Kumaravadivelu's first point is that every language pedagogy must be a pedagogy of particularity, in other words, in order to be relevant, '(it) must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional contest embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu' (p.538). What Kumaravadivelu appears to be arguing for here is not an absence of pedagogic method, but rather a rejection of a universal method that will work for all teachers with all learners in all contexts. His suggestion, like Holliday's (1994), is that certain methods are appropriate for any particular context, while others are inappropriate; hence teachers should obviously discover and use ones that are appropriate.

However, as I have shown, the teachers participating in this study are a highly heterogeneous group, although they all work in the same kinds of institutional context with similar learners. There is no sense that the teachers share even the remotest notion of what method is most relevant in Japanese higher education. As we have

seen, teachers can be as different in their method and style as Harumi, whose teaching is traditional, teacher-fronted, and authoritative, and Dave, who creates a collaborative, 'communistic' atmosphere in his classrooms. The methods of individual teachers can differ considerably even where they share a common educational background, as we saw in the cases of Kaoru and Hiro. Although we have no empirical evidence about which of these teachers is the most effective (which by itself is an extremely complex question), these four teachers appear to be quite satisfied with the teaching they do. How are we to judge which of their different methods is most appropriate?

Kumaravadivelu's second point, a pedagogy of practicality is one that 'aims for a teacher-generated theory of practice' (p.548). Here, Kumaravadivelu appears to depart from his initial suggestion that certain practices work better in certain situations by implying that it is up to the individual teacher to ascertain what works and what doesn't. Furthermore, his implication is that teachers' sense-making matures over time as a matter of course, as they become accustomed to the various factors that combine to make up their job of teaching; in other words, they get better at what they do, and the range of possibilities of what they are able to do expands. However, judging from the teachers in this study, this is not necessarily always the case. Both Jane and John comment that their teaching is not as satisfying as it once was – in Jane's view because of Japanese antipathy to English compared with the attitudes of adult immigrants to Canada, and in John's case, because of the increasing age gap between himself and his students – and both have come to limit their expectations of what is possible inside and outside of the classroom.

The third point, a pedagogy of possibility, refers to the need for language teachers to take account of the sociocultural inequalities in which English as an international language is implicated and to enable their students to appropriate the language so as to fulfill their aspirations, needs and values. Kumaravadivelu illustrates this point by drawing on English language teaching situations in Sri Lanka, South Africa and Palestine, situations which he admits are quite extreme. The socio-cultural context of this study is somewhat different to those countries with regard to Japan's geopolitical and economic position in the world. Moreover, some researchers (Kubota, 2001; McVeigh, 2002) have observed that a nationalist discourse in Japan has influenced attitudes towards English language teaching and learning. In this study, Jane sees such an attitude in the negativity of her students, and in the way Western culture is portrayed in teaching materials developed by her colleagues. How should teachers address questions about Japan's position in the world? In this study, Dave and Kaoru find political questions stimulating and fruitful in their classrooms. But not all teachers would agree. As Duff and Uchida's (1997) study showed, many teachers feel that it is not their job to teach culture or politics, and that to do so would be insensitive or confrontational. But this is a choice that can only be made by the individual teacher.

Kumaravadivelu concludes by proposing that the actualization of a postmethod pedagogy would provide a 'broad road map' (p.549) directing learners, teachers and teacher educators to 'a common destination'. Despite his stated opposition to method, he declares roundly that 'the postmethod learner is an autonomous learner' (p.549) and lists a number of language learning strategies that have been developed within

this school of thought. Whether or not autonomous learning is also a method is a moot point.

Teacher autonomy is also a central objective of postmethod pedagogy.

Kumaravadivelu's argument is with teachers who are overly dependent on particular methods, and it is clear that he has in mind particularly Communicative Language Teaching, although this is arguably no more of a 'method' than learner autonomy.

Moreover, in the context of the present study, the teachers are all autonomous in the sense that they are not under any institutional obligation to teach according to a particular method. Students, of course, may have certain expectations about teaching and learning, but it is a measure of a good teacher's competence and confidence to be able to change these expectations, and to offer learners a rewarding pedagogical experience based on their personal values, beliefs and expertise.

8.6. Evaluating research methodology

In analyzing teachers' positions, I have sought to show that identity can be described on various different levels. I have shown that it is helpful to take into account teachers' actual positions in terms of an institutional hierarchy. John, for example, has far more in common with the tenured Japanese teachers than he does with Dana or Maiko, or even Jane and Dave, in terms of his commitment to a career in Japanese universities and his expectation of playing an active role in the departmental activity of the university to which he was about to move.

On another level are the identity positions that are constructed in teachers' talk. Here Sacks' notion of membership categories is useful for conceptualizing categories as

social and moral communities in which members' rights and obligations are clearly understood. This was illustrated very clearly in Jane's account of a disputed grade, where it is clear that everybody involved in the incident, except Jane, was guilty of infringing a moral code. Examining teachers' positions around such discursive categories, that is, their affiliations with and their oppositions to such categories, provides insights into teachers' beliefs about good teaching and about the social context in which they attempt to realize those beliefs in practice.

Questions need to be asked about the value of this methodology. In the first place, are interviews sufficient evidence of the identity positions teachers adopt with other people, particularly students? In Chapter Three, I discussed Althusser's (1971) concept of 'interpellation', by which identities are called into place, and considered the effect of this in the researcher-participant relationship of the interviews. The way in which these teachers were positioned by me, my assumptions about who they were and what they were saying, surely exerted some influence on the way they talked about themselves and on how they positioned themselves towards me. I drew attention to this in Chapter Five, when it became clear that I had assumed a different position regarding the place of women in higher education from Harumi. By extending the research to observation of these teachers in the classroom, it would be possible to corroborate the conclusions that were drawn from analysis of the interviews, or to witness different kinds of positioning that did not emerge in their narrative accounts.

Although exploring disparities between teachers' identity positions observed in the classroom and the identity positions they adopt in retelling the same event may be a

productive avenue of research, there is a particular advantage to interview research alone. This is that the unstructured, participant-centred approach of the Seidman (1998) model of interviewing allows the teacher to tell the story very much in their own way, selecting incidents and experiences to illustrate their beliefs from the course of their entire working lives. Although every class is significant to some extent, the stories that they choose to tell are of particular significance to the teller; they are events that stand out for them from the ordinary practices and routines of teaching. The phenomenological approach suggests that what is of particular significance for the subject of the research should, by definition, also be of interest to the researcher.

Other considerations need to be taken into account concerning the nature of identity positions. I have suggested that identity positions are strategic, that is, that people always have some wiggle room, or a certain freedom of choice in how they position themselves in any particular situation. But to what extent are discursive positions dictated by cultural language practices? I alluded above to Kaoru's mention of his father's habit of self-deprecation, which he takes the trouble to explain is a characteristic that is highly valued in Japanese society. Self-deprecation is a feature of all the Japanese teachers, even Harumi, who portrays herself as extremely assertive in her teaching style, yet reveals a sense of modesty when talking about her ambition to teach. The Japanese habit of self-deprecation is also mentioned by Maiko, who reports that she is usually far less self-assertive in Japanese than she is in English, although sometimes her parents scold her for being too self-centred when she is speaking Japanese.

A second related consideration concerns the role of personality. To what extent are strategic positions, as I have termed them, merely a reflection of personality, that is, personal attributes over which people have little control? Dave and Kaoru come across in particular as happy, confident, sociable people who appear to be satisfied in their jobs and for whom forming good relations with students is no difficulty. Indeed, Kaoru recalls when he went for an interview for a university position, 'for the American teacher who asked me what is your best point of teaching, I answered personality.' On the other hand, he goes on to elaborate that personality will not appeal to everyone. He concludes: 'I'm not sure all of the students like my personality. It's OK. You have to accept that fact. That's why you say you cannot change your personality ... so I just ... show my personality' (Kaoru (3) p.8).

I would argue, however, that cultural and personal attributes should also be seen in terms of positioning. Bourdieu's (1990) notion of habitus invites us to see these attributes as dispositions we have acquired through our social and genetic histories. As Kaoru says, we cannot simply change or deny our personalities, but we can be open about who we are and where we come from.

8.7. Directions for future research

Conducting long, unstructured interviews generated a great deal of data which proved to be fertile ground for analyzing teachers' positions of identity, which by themselves offer a number of possibilities for future research. I have chosen to encapsulate teachers' positions in dichotomous terms, such as scholar/translator or authority/role model, yet at the same time, I have tried to avoid making judgments of value about the merits of each position. A scholar such as Hiro is not necessarily a better teacher

than a translator like Kaoru. Nevertheless, this relativistic approach runs up against a number of orthodoxies in Applied Linguistic research, in particular the tendency to regard ELT professional discourse as the only discourse that matters in English teaching in higher educational contexts. There has been very little attention paid to these other discourses. Gorsuch (1998) offers a rare exploratory study of Japanese high school teachers' use of a grammar-translation method known as '*yakudoku*', which she condemns as being more useful as a technique of discipline and control than of effective pedagogy. There is scope however for further investigation of this and other widespread pedagogical practices in education systems around the world.

This study has found that teachers followed some very different career paths into higher education teaching. Although the Japanese teachers (except Maiko) were more similar in this respect, further questions could be asked about, for example, experiences of education systems in other countries and how they relate those to their teaching in Japan. The foreign teachers in this study came into higher education teaching from different routes: Jane from adult ESL teaching and university lecturing in Canada, Dave and Dana via the commercial language schools in Japan (although Dave also had an RSA certificate prior to starting teaching), and John crossed over from journalism working for a Japanese newspaper. Here too, further study is warranted on the effects of different career backgrounds on teachers' beliefs and practices.

Finally, a more triangulated approach to examining teacher identity positions could be taken, as mentioned above. Teachers' identity positions can be studied through observation of classes, in their interaction with students. They can also be examined

from a closer focus on methods and materials adopted by the teachers, as well as their attitudes towards evaluation and feedback. Triangulation can also be achieved by involving other people from the teacher's working life, for example, a consideration of how teachers' identity positions are understood by their students or colleagues.

8.8. Conclusion

The study described in this thesis of professional and cultural identity of English language teachers provides several new insights into language teacher identity:

- It challenges the assumption that there is only one professional discourse that matters in ELT. The teachers examined in this study include experts in literary translation, 17th century English literature and contemporary literary theory, and phonetics. Applied Linguistics and ELT could benefit from a closer investigation of language teaching practices inherent in other professional discourses.
- In the course of examining professional identity, this thesis offers a fresh perspective on the concept of expertise. Moving away from the current thinking about expertise that privileges aspects of learning and change, whether as a particular psychological approach to practice, that may be intuitive (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000) or guided by conscious self-reflection (Edge, 1992; Schon, 1983; 1991) or shared with other teachers (Tsui, 2003), I suggest that it needs to be conceptualized more in terms of

stable and consistent principles and practices that enable flexibility and adjustment.

- An examination of teachers' identity positions in relation to the language and culture they teach enables me to contribute an original critique of various critical linguistic concepts associated with English as an International Language.
- There are clear implications for teacher education and development of the value of the concept of strategic positioning. An awareness of how we tend to position ourselves in our working lives and how others see us can allow us to see what alternative and better strategies might be available to us.

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out to examine whether and in what way teacher identity matters in language teaching. The eight teachers whose stories are told here provide unique insights into the multiple ways in which identity and practice are interconnected. The positions that these language teachers occupy are determined by a combination of circumstance and choice, and a better understanding of those two aspects of their working lives might help teachers to achieve greater personal and professional satisfaction. More importantly, a focus on identity as position encourages us to see that language teachers are not so much executors of overt or hidden curricula as they are generally well-meaning moral agents in an ever-changing social context.

APPENDIX

Letter/email to participants

Dear

Thank you very much for agreeing to help me with my doctoral research.

As I mentioned to you, I am aiming to conduct an exploratory study on the subject of teacher identity. This will involve three separate interviews, the first covering your academic and work history, the second your working practices, and a final one reflecting on issues or themes that have arisen in the first two, which is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching in more depth. There is no set format of questions; I will prompt you with questions, but essentially I would like to talk on the subject of the interview in the way and in as much depth as you would like. Each interview should last approximately ninety minutes. Ideally, I would like to conduct each of the interviews within a few days of each other.

All the interviews will be taped. After each interview, I will write a summary, which I will give you to check. This is to check for any misunderstanding I may have of what you have said, as well as to raise issues that can be clarified in the second and third interviews. I will keep the tapes until the doctorate is completed, after which time I will return them to you.

I am conducting this study for the main purpose of writing a doctorate. However, it is possible that I may submit papers based on the study for publication in academic journals. I will keep you informed of any intention to do so.

If you would prefer me not to use your name, or in any other way ensure anonymity in my treatment of your interviews, I will be happy to discuss with you ways of achieving this.

As we agreed, our first meeting is on/at

I very much look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely

Alison Stewart

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